

Israeli army demolishes Arab family's home again

HEBRON (AFP) — Israeli soldiers demolished on Tuesday the home of a 12-member Palestinian family which had already lost one house to army bulldozers nine years ago, family members said. Zohour Atrash told AFP that soldiers came to her home south of Hebron early Tuesday and razed the building, saying it had been built without proper authorisation near a road used by Jewish settlers. "This is the second time the army demolished our house. They already came in 1988, but we rebuilt it," she said. Ms. Atrash said 12 family members lived in the 200-square-metre house. The Israeli army has demolished about 10 Palestinian houses on the West Bank over the past month, according to Palestinian sources.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية. الراي.

Iraq appeals to Arabs to look after their property in Iraq

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The Iraqi government appealed Monday night to Kuwaiti, Saudi and other Arab owners of abandoned property in southern Iraq, to start looking after it again. The Iraqi cabinet, chaired by President Saddam Hussein, "discussed ways to develop real estate and gardens belonging to Kuwaitis and Saudis in Basra province," the official INA news agency said. The cabinet "decided to ask representatives of the owners to resume caring for the property," the agency said. Thousands of Saudis and Kuwaitis, whose countries border Iraq, invested in land and real estate in Iraq before the 1991 Gulf war. They had to leave Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

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Iraq vows to respect Annan deal as U.N. prepares to test accord

Clinton underscores Security Council warning, his officers say that 'severest consequences' means a military operation

Combined agency dispatches

U.S. PRESIDENT Bill Clinton underscored a stern warning sent to Iraq through a unanimous U.N. Security Council resolution on Monday, urging Iraq to allow U.N. weapons inspectors to do their work or face "severest consequences."

"Tonight's unanimous vote by the United Nations Security Council sends the clearest possible message: Iraq must make good on its commitment to give the international weapons inspectors immediate, unconditional and unrestricted access to any suspect site, any place, anytime," Mr. Clinton said in a statement read by a White House spokeswoman.

"All of the members of the council agree that failure to do so will result in the severest consequences for Iraq," Mr. Clinton said in the statement.

The statement, issued shortly after the vote to warn Iraq of "severest consequences" if it again barred inspectors from any suspected arms sites, came even as Washington continued to prepare for the possible use of military force against Iraq.

A high-ranking French envoy arrived in Baghdad



Members of the Security Council vote at the United Nations in New York on Monday. The U.N. Security Council, in a unanimous vote, warned Iraq of 'severest consequences' if it again barred U.N. arms inspectors from any suspected arms site (Reuters photo)

Tuesday with a message from French President Jacques Chirac urging Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to comply with the U.N. resolution on weapons inspections.

Bertrand Dufourcq, the top civil servant in the French foreign ministry, landed at the capital's Saddam International Airport aboard a private plane.

Earlier reports said that Mr. Dufourcq's message

stresses the need for Iraq to abide by the agreement signed with the U.N., and when arms inspections are complete, France would push for the total lifting of sanctions.

Iraq, on Tuesday, stressed its commitment again to the arms inspection deal with U.N. chief Kofi Annan, as the Security Council warned of the "severest consequences" if Baghdad fails the test.

The 15-member Council

"We signed the accord with the U.N. secretary general and we are committed to respecting it, and nothing else counts for us," Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said.

The Security Council's resolution, which endorsed the agreement on full access for U.N. arms inspectors, has set the scene for the next phase: testing the accord on the ground in Iraq.

The 15-member Council

unanimously adopted Resolution 1154, although the major powers were split over whether military force should be used if Iraq sues from the deal (see full text of Resolution on page 2).

China, France and Russia managed to cut out any reference to a threat of automatic use of force, despite pressure from the United States.

Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Gennady Tarasov said the resolution confirmed the U.N. Security Council's responsibility for ensuring that Iraq complies with the deal, and "thereby excludes any hint of automatically resorting to force, which was unacceptable for the majority of Security Council members."

Chinese Foreign Affairs spokesman Zhu Bangzao also said that "the resolution does not mean that the U.N. Security Council automatically authorises any country to use force against Iraq."

"It is the U.N. Security Council who should determine by discussion whether Iraq violates the memorandum of understanding and whether to take corresponding action," he added. However, the U.S. administration, airing Washington's scepticism over the

(Continued on page 7)



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, sees His Majesty King Hussein off as he departs for the UAE on Tuesday (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)

King, UAE president discuss pan-Arab issues, bilateral ties

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein discussed on Tuesday with UAE President Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan bilateral relations, pan-Arab issues, international issues of common concern and the peace process, particularly on the Palestinian-Israeli track.

The two leaders stressed the Palestinians' legitimate rights to their independent state on their national soil, the

Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported from Abu Dhabi.

The King, accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Royal Court Chief Fayez Tarawneh and His Royal Highness Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, was accorded a full-honour ceremony upon arrival at Abu Dhabi, with Sheikh Zayed at the head of those welcoming him.

King Hussein was seen off at Amman airport by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Royal family members and senior officials.

Prince Hassan was sworn in as Regent during the King's absence abroad.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Jawad Anani said the King's five

(Continued on page 7)

UAE, Morocco fly in aid on record day for air traffic to Baghdad

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Three planes from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Morocco flew in food and medical aid for the sanctions-hit population of Iraq on Tuesday, amid Arab calls for the embargo to be lifted.

Two UAE planes, loaded with 80 tonnes of food, milk, medicine and clothes, touched down in Baghdad, the official news agency INA said.

"This... reflects our total solidarity with the Iraqi people, who have been faced with an unjust embargo imposed by the United Nations more than seven years ago," said UAE Red Crescent official Said Mohammad Mansuri.

A Royal Air Maroc Boeing-727, loaded with 10 tonnes of medicine, also landed in Baghdad. Moroccan trade union official Ahmad Hussein called for "Arab support for

Iraq in the face of the embargo."

On a record day for air traffic to Baghdad since the sanctions, a fourth plane was expected here late Tuesday, this time carrying French special envoy Bertrand Dufourcq carrying a message for President Saddam Hussein.

The planes from Abu Dhabi, the second of which was expected later the same day, were originally due in on Monday but delayed to await clearance to overfly Saudi Arabia.

The UAE, which supports a lifting of sanctions, has said it is setting up an air bridge for Baghdad, which has been under embargo since its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The Red Crescent Society in Abu Dhabi said it plans to open a centre in Baghdad to

coordinate the distribution of aid. The UAE organisation already sent two plane-loads of relief supplies to Iraq on Feb. 21.

Since Dec. 25, Djibouti, Egypt and Qatar have also sent aid planes to Baghdad, along with Russia and Iceland, after receiving authorisation from a U.N. committee overseeing the sanctions.

"The fact these planes are being sent is proof that Arab sentiment about the sufferings of the Iraqis is growing stronger each day," said an Arab diplomat posted in Iraq's capital.

The recent [Iraq-U.N.] crisis has pushed the people of the Arab World in the right direction and encouraged them to work to restore Arab solidarity," the diplomat said.

Thousands at risk of famine in south Sudan

GENEVA (AFP) — Some 350,000 people in war-torn southern Sudan face famine, the World Food Programme (WFP) warned here Tuesday.

WFP spokeswoman Christine Berthiaume said those affected were in the Bahr Al Ghazal region and included 150,000 people uprooted by fighting at the end of January in the towns of Wau, Gogrial and Awiit.

"It's important that we get to as many people as possible as quick as possible because the next two months will be particularly critical," she said.

Hunger was forcing people to walk four or five hours to find wild fruits, and Ms. Berthiaume said aid must be delivered quickly to stop this movement and allow inhabitants to once again cultivate their land.

The last crop was planted in 1994 and the output provided food the following year. But since 1996, international aid had been the only lifeline because the war has made harvesting impossible, the spokeswoman said.

"The Sudanese are asking us for food because they want to sow this year. There is the possibility of recreating this year the conditions in 1994," Ms. Berthiaume said.

The Khartoum-based regime since 1983 has been fighting Christian and Muslim rebels in the south. The conflict and war-related famine and epidemics are believed to have claimed more than one million lives.

The WFP is sending in 400 tonnes of food to the area from Uganda. Some 281 tonnes already shipped to eight places, Ms. Berthiaume said.

Israelis, Palestinians discuss safe passageways

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli and Palestinian negotiators held a new round of talks Tuesday on opening free passage corridors linking the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but there were few expectations of an agreement.

Israeli Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh and Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat met at a Jerusalem hotel to discuss the free passage issue.

Mr. Erekat said the Israeli and Palestinian heads of the committee dealing with the issue would brief them on the state of negotiations. He gave no indication that progress was expected.

Mr. Erekat and Mr. Naveh already held an initial round of talks late Monday at the residence near Tel Aviv of U.S. Ambassador Edward Walker on long-stalled plans to open a

joint Israeli-Palestinian industrial park on the edge of the Gaza Strip.

No progress was reported from that meeting as Israelis rebuffed demands that the industrial zone be permitted to operate and export its products even during border closures routinely imposed by Israel following major Palestinian attacks in Israel, officials said.

Negotiations between the two sides have been deadlocked for a year, largely due to Israel's refusal to carry out promised troop withdrawals from more of the West Bank or to halt construction of Jewish settlements in disputed areas.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says his refusal to implement signed peace accords is justified by the Palestinian National

Authority's failure to dismantle Islamist groups responsible for deadly attacks on Israel, including suicide bombings which killed 24 Israelis last year.

U.S. efforts to find a compromise agreement linking Israeli troop withdrawals to tougher Palestinian action against guerrillas have so far failed to bear fruit.

In addition to the troop withdrawals, the interim peace accords call on Israel to approve the opening of the industrial zone as well as an airport and seaport in the Gaza Strip and the free passage corridors.

Negotiations on all these secondary issues have been stalled for months with Israelis and Palestinians blaming each other for the deadlock.

Clinton mulling ways to restart peace process

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton met Tuesday with top advisors including U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to consider ways to get the long-stalled Mideast peace process moving, the White House said.

"This meeting is a prelude to further steps, undefined," said White House spokesman Michael McCurry, who declined to say if the president was considering sending Mideast envoy Dennis Ross to the region.

He acknowledged that there "has been very little change" since January when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat visited Washington. Mr. McCurry clearly established a link between the peace process, which stalled a year ago, and the temporary resolution of the Iraqi crisis with the Feb. 23 signing of an agreement between U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and the Iraqi government.

"There is ample reason, given the events in Iraq, to press forward on efforts to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for the region," said Mr. McCurry, apparently referring to the U.S. decision not to use military force against Iraq at this time.

Lebanese Druze to join Hizbollah against Israel — Jumblatt

TEHRAN (AFP) — Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt said here Tuesday he was considering joining the Hizbollah movement to strengthen resistance against Israeli occupation of south Lebanon.

Mr. Jumblatt, on a visit to Iran since Sunday, told a press conference that his Progressive Socialist Party was discussing "ways of serious participation in the resistance" with Hizbollah.

"The former resistance could not reach its aims and I think the methods used by Hizbollah are more advanced and effective," he said, referring to Druze collaboration with the Palestinians and leftist Lebanese groups in Lebanon during the civil war to fight Israel.

"We will provide forces to be recruited in cells of resistance, but the Hizbollah will be the sponsor," Mr. Jumblatt said, adding that his party had dis-

mantled its militia eight years ago.

The Shiite Islamist Hizbollah spearheads the fight against Israel's occupation of a strip of land in south Lebanon, and has had a spate of successful military operations against Israeli forces and their allied militia in Lebanon.

Mr. Jumblatt, who is also the minister of the displaced, rejected Israel's conditional offer to withdraw its troops from a buffer zone Israel maintains with the self-declared purpose to ward off cross-border attacks on its northern territory.

"We want to get our land back but without preconditions, without their imposing a peace treaty on us. We want to see U.N. Resolution 425 implemented," he said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday said he was ready to pull

Israeli troops out of south Lebanon "when we have the assurances that Hizbollah will no longer be a threat to the north of our country."

"The Lebanese army must deploy in and control south Lebanon and halt Hizbollah operations. It has the strength to do it, it's now a question of political will," Mr. Netanyahu said.

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami called during a meeting with Mr. Jumblatt on Tuesday for unity among Lebanese factions in a bid to ensure the country's stability and development.

"Lebanon more than any country is subjected to aggression from the enemies of Islam and the Arab World. Therefore, Lebanese groups should aim for a unified country," he said.

Text of U.N. resolution on Iraq

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Herewith is the text of the U.N. Security Council resolution on Iraqi weapons inspections, passed unanimously late Monday:

RECALLING all its previous relevant resolutions, which constitute the governing standard of Iraqi compliance, DETERMINED to ensure immediate and full compliance by Iraq without conditions or restrictions with its obligations under Resolution 687 (1991) and the other relevant resolutions, REAFFIRMING the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence

of Iraq, Kuwait and the neighbouring states, ACTING under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, 1. COMMENDS the initiative by the Secretary General to secure commitments from the Government of Iraq on compliance with its obligations under the relevant resolutions, and in this regard ENDORSES the memorandum of understanding signed by the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq and the Secretary General on 23 February 1998 (S/1998/166) and LOOKS FORWARD to its early and full implementation; 2. REQUESTS the Secretary-General to report to the Council

as soon as possible with regard to the procedures for Presidential sites in consultation with the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Special Commission and the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); 3. STRESSES that compliance by the Government of Iraq with its obligations, repeated again in the memorandum of understanding, to accord immediate, unconditional and unrestricted access to the Special Commission and the IAEA in conformity with the relevant resolutions is necessary for the implementation of resolution 687 (1991), but

that any violation would have severe consequences for Iraq; 4. REAFFIRMS its intention to act in accordance with the relevant provisions of Resolution 687 (1991) on the duration of the prohibitions referred to in that resolution and NOTES that by its failure so far to comply with its relevant obligations Iraq has delayed the moment when the Council can do so; 5. DECIDES, in accordance with its responsibilities under the Charter, to remain actively seized of the matter, in order to ensure implementation of this resolution, and to secure peace and security in the area.

Plan devised to prevent Israeli Arabs from leasing land — report

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli officials have drawn up a plan to transfer vast tracts of state land to a quasi-government agency so Israeli Arabs cannot gain control of the territory, a newspaper reported Tuesday.

The Yediot Achronot said the plan was drawn up by Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon, the leading cabinet hardliner, and Avraham Burg, chairman of the Jewish Agency, and was approved by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Mr. Sharon proposed allocating hundreds of thousands of hectares of state land, mostly in the southern Negev desert but also in the northern Galilee region, to the Jewish Agency.

The agency, which was set up in the 1920s to settle Jews in what is now Israel, would then grant long-term leases to the land for large, Jewish-run farms or cooperatives, the

newspaper reported. Yediot quoted an official in Mr. Sharon's ministry as saying the aim of the proposal was to "prevent hostile elements from gaining control of state lands."

It said Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing government was worried about possible requests by bedouins or other Israeli Arabs, who make up about 18 per cent of Israel's population, for long-term leases to unused state lands.

In Israel, more than 90 per cent of the land is controlled by the state Lands Authority or two other agencies, which in turn lease land to developers or other bodies, like the Jewish Agency.

Unlike the Israeli Lands Authority, which has no legal way to prevent the leasing of land to Arabs, the Jewish Agency uses a 1952 law which it says permits non-governmental bodies to refuse to lease

land to non-Jews.

The Jewish Agency policy is currently being challenged before Israel's supreme court by an Israeli Arab family which has been refused permission to build a home in a northern Israeli cooperative set up by the agency.

The high court is due to hold a new hearing on the case March 10.

Critics say the efforts to bar land leases to Arabs is blatant discrimination, notably given that Mr. Netanyahu's administration repeatedly insists on Jews' right to settle in Arab parts of Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The Netanyahu government has also lashed out at the Palestinian National Authority for preparing laws barring the sale of Arab land to Jews, saying such legislation is akin to laws in Nazi Germany which restricted Jews' right to property.

Israeli planes raid south Lebanon

NABATTIYEH (R) — Israeli planes carried out two raids Tuesday on suspected positions of Hizbollah guerrillas in south Lebanon after the group attacked an Israeli outpost, witnesses said.

In the first raid, two Israeli aircraft fired a total of two rockets at the Aqmat area, they said.

Twenty minutes later, Israeli planes pounded suspected Hizbollah positions in a second raid, raising to 29 the number of Israeli air attacks on Lebanon since the start of this year.

There were no immediate reports of casualties. In Jerusalem, the Israeli army said in a statement: "Israeli air force planes attacked terrorist targets this morning in the area of Jabal Soud in south Lebanon. The pilots reported accurate hits and all our planes returned safely to their bases."

Hizbollah said hours before the raids that it had attacked an Israeli outpost at Sojoud. It did not immediately report casualties in that attack.

Israeli planes often rocket suspected Hizbollah targets in south Lebanon.

Hizbollah guerrillas are fighting to oust Israeli troops and their local militia allies, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), from Israeli-occupied south Lebanon occupation zone.



STRIKE IN JERUSALEM: A Palestinian woman Tuesday passes by closed shops in east Jerusalem during a one-day general strike called by Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction 'to protest Israel's policies in Jerusalem,' as the Jewish state hosted a world conference of mayors in the disputed city (AFP photo)

Netanyahu to name new Mossad chief soon

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he will appoint within days a new chief to head the country's famed Mossad secret service.

The new leader will inherit a spy agency rocked in the last six months by a bungled attempt to assassinate an Islamist leader in Jordan, the failed bugging of a home in Switzerland, and the arrest of a former official on suspicion of feeding false information on Israel's arch-foe Syria.

Following are the leading candidates to replace Mossad chief Danny Yatom, who offered his resignation last week:

— Major General Amiram Levine. Maj. Gen. Levine, who heads the army's northern command, was once Mr. Netanyahu's commander in an

elite commando unit and is widely pegged as front-runner.

A Mossad outsider, Maj. Gen. Levine has had ample experience in secret operations in his more than 30 years in uniform.

He took part in a 1973 operation to attack Palestinian fighter leaders in Beirut and was involved in the planning and execution of the army's famed 1976 raid on Uganda's Entebbe airport to rescue Israeli hostages from Palestinian commandos.

Maj. Gen. Levine was wounded four times in his military career and won the army's highest decoration after Israel's 1982 Lebanon war but was rebuffed for his role in a 1992 training accident in which five soldiers died.

Maj. Gen. Levine's operational skills have won praise

from Mossad watchers, but critics are cool to the idea of naming a military man to head the agency, saying it now focuses less on covert operations and more on intelligence gathering and coordination between domestic and foreign agencies.

— "A". Former head of the Mossad's political wing, "A," whose name remains secret in line with agency tradition, competed with Mr. Yatom to run the Mossad in 1996 and left the agency after being passed over for the top post, according to the Yediot Achronot newspaper.

"A" has held a number of top Mossad jobs, including head of the operational branch. The newspaper said he is viewed as the only agency insider suitable to run the Mossad.

— Maj. Gen. Meir Vinitz.

Like Maj. Gen. Levine, former deputy chief of staff, Major General Vinitz, has more than 30 years of active army service and also played a role in the Entebbe raid.

Major General Vinitz, now on leave for studies in the United States, is seen as the leading candidate to be named chief of staff when that post opens this summer and is an outsider for the Mossad job.

— Major General Moshe Yaalon. Maj. Gen. Yaalon, nicknamed "Bogi," is current chief of military intelligence and has served as commander of Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank.

Israeli media have also mentioned former Mossad chief Shabtai Shavit and Major General Amiaz Sagis, director of army logistics and technology, as candidates for the post.

Spain negotiating major arms deal with Turkey — paper

MADRID (AFP) — Spain is negotiating a \$2 billion arms sale to Turkey, including four navy frigates, the Spanish daily El Pais said Tuesday.

The report came as Turkish President Suleiman Demirel left Ankara for a three-day state visit to Spain.

As well as the four frigates, the paper said includes the sale of a

dozen Spanish CN-235 transport planes to join the 52 Ankara purchased in 1990.

According to El Pais, Washington had to approve the deal because the frigates used Lockheed-Martin's Aegis weapons systems.

The contract is not expected to be a subject of discussion during Mr. Demirel's visit, aimed at

strengthening political, economic and cultural ties between the two countries.

Mr. Demirel will be accompanied on his trip by Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem and a high-ranking business delegation.

Bilateral trade in 1997 stood at \$1.6 billion, with Spain enjoying a surplus of \$600 million.

Somalia's two main warlords finally meet in Mogadishu

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Two key Somali warlords met in Mogadishu on Tuesday to discuss formation of a joint authority to administer the divided city, organisers of the meeting told AFP.

Hussien Muhammad Aided and General Ali Mahdi Mohamed met at south Mogadishu's

Sahafi Hotel after many failed attempts to bring them together in the past month.

The two faction chiefs also discussed issues regarding a national reconciliation conference planned for March 31 in the northwest town of Baidoa, the organisers said.

Gen. Ali Mahdi, whose faction

controls north Mogadishu, said after the talks that he was dissatisfied with the lack of progress in the Somali peace process and that he and Mr. Aided had agreed to speed up reconciliation.

For his part, Mr. Aided said the obstacles that forced the postponement of talks had been

resolved, a breakthrough that could see the reopening of the main port and airport, closed since international peacekeeping forces departed from Somalia in March 1995.

Gen. Ali Mahdi and Mr. Aided also said broadcasts by their respective radio stations in the Somali capital would be

coordinated.

A top source in Gen. Ali Mahdi's faction told AFP that from now on, Mr. Aided would stop claiming to be president of Somalia — a key demand of Gen. Ali Mahdi.

The source said that a joint authority for Mogadishu would be established within 10 days.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Algerian police shot dead in ambush

ALGIERS (AFP) — Suspected Islamist rebels have shot dead three police officers in an ambush in eastern Algeria, the daily Liberté newspaper reported Tuesday. Several other officers were injured in Monday's

ambush near Texenna in the region of Jijel, the newspaper said.

Sudan rebel leader escapes assassination — report

KHARTOUM (AFP) — South Sudanese rebel leader Kerubino Kuanyen has escaped an assassination attempt by one of his aides in Warab state, a Khartoum paper reported Tuesday. Al Rai Al Akher, quoting people arriving from Warab, said an explosive device planted by a bodyguard at Major General Kerubino's residence in Leth-Nom town had gone off minutes before Major General Kuanyen entered.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

16:10Mr. Bogus
16:30French Programme
18:00 Children's Programme
18:30 Drama — Neighbours
19:00Le Journal
19:15French Programme
19:30News headlines
19:35Campus Cops
20:00The Nature of Healing
20:30The History Makers
21:10Drama — Kung Fu
22:00News in English
22:30Illis Island
23:10Country Music
23:59End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:40Fajr
05:56Sunrise/Duha
11:47Dhuhr
15:05Asr
17:38Maghreb
18:55Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5921740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel.
4634590
Terza Sancta Church Tel.
4622360
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811.

JORDAN TIME

Tel. 773111-19

St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church

Tel. 771751.

Amman International Church

Tel. 865897

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 5688404

The Evangelical Local Church

in Amman Tel. 811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter

Day Saints Tel. 4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la

Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation

Tel. 4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel.

4623541

Church of Presentation, Sweifeh

Tel. 5920146

The United Catholic Church

Tel. 4624757

The English-Language

Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel.

892679

The Baptist Church Tel.

4628052

The Armenian Catholic

Church 771331

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the
Department of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to
rise slightly, skies partly
cloudy to sunny, and winds
northwesterly moderate. In
Aqaba, it will be sunny and

fine, winds northerly moderate
and seas calm.

Amman03/15

Aqaba10/23

Deserts02/17

Jordan Valley09/22

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 13, Aqaba 22 Humid-

ity readings: Amman 45 per

cent, Aqaba 30 per cent.

USEFUL
TELEPHONE
NUMBERS
NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Fakher Bilbeisi5522233

Dr. Adnan Zaghloul898140

Dr. Fayed Dabbas759155

Dr. Mazen Nhalli830435

Firas pharmacy5661912

Ferdows pharmacy890280

Al Asena pharmacy4637055

Al Salam pharmacy4636730

Yacoub pharmacy4644945

Shmeisani pharmacy4637660

Nairoukh pharmacy4623672

Najib pharmacy847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qanu281484

Dr. Quds pharmacy(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Zahour Al Qadi906606

Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111

Civil Defence Department5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Resc-

ue4630341

Civil Defence Emergency199

Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777

Fire Brigade4617101

Blood Bank775121

Highway Police843402

Hotel Complaints5605800

Public Security Dept.896390

Amman Municipality Com-

plaints787111

Telephone Information (directo-

ry assistance)121

Overseas Calls010230

Central Amman Telephone

Repairs4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101

Jordan Television773111

Radio Jordan774111

Water Authority5680100

J. Electricity Authority815615

Electric Power Co.4636381

RJ Flight Information44-53200

Queen Alia Int'l. Airport44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussain Medical Centre Tel.

836813, 856856

Luzmila4630195

Khalidi Maternity4644281/6

Akileh Maternity4642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity4642362

Malhas, J. Amman4636140

Palestine, Shmeisani5607071

Shmeisani Hospital5669131

University Hospital845845

Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 5666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 77101/3

Al-Bashir775111/26

Army, Marka891611/5

Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50

Amal Hospital5674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and

Special Surgery865199

ZARQA:

Govt. Hospital

Zarqa(09)983323

National Hospital

Zarqa(09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital(09)98732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital

.....(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital

.....(02)275555

Greek Catholic Hospital

.....(02)272275

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital

.....(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital

.....(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT

This information is supplied

by Royal Jordanian (RJ) infor-

mation department at the

Queen Alia International Air-

port Tel. (44)53200 where it

should always be verified.

Information on other flights

are supplied on phone 44

(52700) or 44(53250).



TOURISM MINISTER HOLDS BRIEFING: Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji on Tuesday briefs members of the Jordanian Tourism Promotion Board on the latest ministry policies to encourage internal tourism. The meeting was attended by Royal Jordanian Chief Executive Officer Nader Dahabi and French Ambassador to Jordan Bernard Bajelet (Petra photo)

Jordanian-Libyan committee prepares for upcoming joint ministerial meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — A Jordanian-Libyan committee held a meeting Tuesday at the Ministry of Industry and Trade in preparation for a joint ministerial meeting due to begin in Amman on March 10.

The preparatory committee reviewed the agenda of the upcoming meeting, according to Samir Umeish, an advisor at the ministry.

According to Dr. Umeish,

who led the Jordanian side to the meeting, Libya is a major market for Jordan's pharmaceuticals and ready-made garments.

He said the preparatory meeting covered means of facilitating the marketing of Jordanian pharmaceutical products on the Libyan market as well as obstacles and problems currently impeding this objective.

Dr. Umeish added that the meeting also considered signing an executive

programme for the implementation of an agreement on cooperation in the fields of information, media, and culture and youth affairs, as well as cooperation between the national news agencies of the two countries.

The prospect of signing an agreement on organising land transport of goods and travellers and the conclusion of a protocol on cooperation in health-related affairs were also discussed.

According to Dr. Umeish, the executive programme on culture covers the years 1998-2000 and entails sending Jordanian teachers to Libya, arranging for educational training courses, and exchanging expertise in education-related fields.

He said the preparatory committee examined the prospects of signing an agreement to encourage and protect investments made by Libyans or Jordanians in either country to

bolster economic cooperation.

The preparatory committee also looked into the possibility of bilateral cooperation in tourism and in training tourism sector personnel.

Dr. Umeish said the three-day ministerial committee meeting is to be chaired by Minister of Industry and Trade and Supply Hani Mulki and Libyan Minister of Health Sulaiman Ghamouri.

Cabinet reviews \$32m World Bank loan deal

AMMAN (Petra) — The Council of Ministers on Tuesday reviewed a memorandum submitted by Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf about a \$32 million loan deal from the World Bank to finance Jordan's second tourism development project.

During a regular session, the Cabinet endorsed an amendment to the agreement authorising the Ministry of Tourism to work with the Ministry of Agriculture's range and forestation department to carry out a number of schemes within the tourist regions of Wadi Musa and the ancient Nabataean city of Petra.

The Cabinet approved the formation of a delegation to a meeting by foreign ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) due to open in Doha, Qatar, on March 15. The delegation will be led by Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi.

Another delegation was formed to prepare for the Jordan Badia Week, due to open in London on March 16 under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hassan.

The Badia Week will be part of the Kingdom's efforts to attract investments for the development of the badia region and highlight the region's culture and heritage and British-sponsored studies and research programmes conducted in conjunction with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and Royal Jordanian.

47-year-old sentenced to death after review of 1997 life sentence

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A 47-year-old self-described "healer," convicted of robbing and killing a woman in 1996 and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1997, now faces the death penalty.

Mustafa Abdul Mustafa was sentenced to death by Judges Marwan Dabbas, Ibrahim Ali, and Sami Karaki for murdering Heigari Ali, 44, in his Jerash home on February 8, 1996.

On March 16, 1997, another court tribunal sentenced Mr. Abdul Mustafa to life in prison after deciding to amend the original

charges of premeditated murder, filed by the prosecution, because it ruled that Mr. Abdul Mustafa had not planned the murder beforehand.

But the Court of Cassation, which examined the case, returned the case to the Criminal Court asking for a tougher penalty.

According to court documents, the victim was a long-time acquaintance of Mr. Abdul Mustafa and she often visited him to obtain medication for stomach pains.

On the day of the incident, court transcripts said, Ms. Ali went to Mr. Abdul Mustafa's house for medica-

tion. Due to past arguments with Ms. Ali, he decided to kill her both in revenge and for financial gain because, the transcripts stated, she was wearing gold.

"When Mr. Abdul Mustafa saw her gold, he decided to kill her by mixing poison with an herbal drink," the court said.

The woman, a nurse who worked at the Jerash Health Centre and a mother of four, died in four minutes, the court said.

He then bound the woman's body, placed it in a box and travelled to the Jineh Highway in the Sukhneh area of Zarqa, it

added. "He placed the box on a pile of stones and straw in a deserted area near the highway, poured kerosene and set the body ablaze in an attempt to conceal his crime," the court said.

He then sold the gold for JD805.

Criminal Prosecutor Imad Kilani asked the tribunal for the maximum penalty, stating during the 20-minute court session that Mr. Abdul Mustafa "had plotted the murder."

Tuesday's death sentence will be reviewed by the Court of Cassation within the next 30 days.

Justice minister maintains silence on rationale behind judge's retirement

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Minister of Justice Riyad Shaka'a yesterday broke his silence following a decision by the Higher Judicial Council last week to retire Council President Farouq Kilani, but justification for the decision remains a secret.

Mr. Shaka'a said the council's unanimous decision to retire Judge Kilani, who was also head of the Court of Cassation, followed his own recommendation — a right reserved for the minister in accordance with the law of Independence of the Judiciary.

Mr. Shaka'a was quoted by Al-Dustour daily on Tuesday as saying that his recommendation to the council to retire Judge Kilani was not motivated by personal reasons.

"Recommendations are normally discussed by the interest of the judiciary in a manner that would ensure harmony [within the system] and security for all those who work in the judiciary, away from any obstacles or

pressures," he said. He did not elaborate further.

Over the past week, Mr. Kilani has levelled a firestorm of charges against the minister, saying that the minister recommended his retirement in order to protect corrupt judges whom Mr. Kilani says he was intent on removing and that Mr. Shaka'a was resisting his reform drive, which was approved by His Majesty King Hussein.

Mr. Kilani asserted that corruption in the judiciary was rampant and cited the acquittal last July of a man of 85 charges ranging from trafficking babies to forgery of official documents and rape. The decision was subsequently overturned at the Court of Cassation last December.

The retirement of Mr. Kilani, who was recommended for appointment by Mr. Shaka'a, but served only two and a half months in the two posts when the minister recommended his retirement, reopened the latent debate about the independence of the country's judiciary and

judicial reform and opened public speculation about the judicial council's decision.

"There is a principle here," said a prominent lawyer. "If a law requires you to give reasons, you are obliged to do so. Every decision must have a reason. The problem is that the law does not require the minister or council to declare the reason for the dismissal, retirement or appointment of a judge."

"We also have to look at the use of the word 'tanseeb' [recommendation]," he said. "This word should mean that there is substance [to an argument] to convince those who are taking such decisions that it is the right decision. That the recommendation is a justified one and that, therefore, the decision is justified. This word is not necessarily interpreted that way."

Instead, he said, lawyers and judges must establish the reasons if they can, should a judge decide to impugn a decision from the council at the High Court of Justice.

Environmental society raising student awareness by increasing involvement

By Nadia Mukhlis
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — With the strong belief that protecting the environment is in the hands of the young generation, the Friends of the Environment Society (FOE) last week held its annual competition inviting students to identify environmental problems in their community and devise sustainable solutions that are scientifically sound and economically feasible, according to FOE spokesperson Rana Naber.

The students, who come from secondary schools all over the Kingdom, work on their projects during the school year, with the FOE offering several support meetings. Ms. Naber explained.

A ceremony was held at Al Hussein Sport City for the students, their teachers and supervisors. The projects were presented and the winners were

given prizes and certificates, she said.

"It is very inspiring to see the number of participants increasing annually, because this is proof that students and the younger generation in general are becoming more aware of environmental needs and thus are becoming more protective of the environment," Ms. Naber added.

Referring to several other activities that the FOE carries out, Ms. Naber said the society has begun a three-year project under which chosen students are responsible for following up, monitoring and evaluating projects in different parts of the country.

The society also puts out an annual calendar entitled "Environment Through the Eyes of the Children." The society organises an annual drawing competition for children under 15 years of age, chooses 12 winning drawings, and prints them on locally recycled paper in the form of an environmental calendar, Ms. Naber explained.

"The proceeds from the calendar sales go for the support of the society," she added.

In another bid to increase environmental awareness and promote a better understanding of the sensitive issues affecting different communities, the FOE arranged a comprehensive camping expedition to Wadi Rum for a group of Jubilee School students.

This field trip brought together Bedouin and city students of similar ages and allowed them to interact in a desert environment, Ms. Naber said.

"This interaction allowed the Jubilee students to understand, through direct first-hand experience, the reality of Bedouin life, visit archaeological sites, conduct a clean up campaign and make personal visits to locals in their homes," Ms. Naber said.

what's going on

Pioneering entrepreneur serves as role model for Jordan's women

This is the second in a series of five articles that the Jordan Times will publish leading up to International Women's Day, observed on March 8.

By Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — During the 1960s in Jordan, there were few if any women that owned or operated businesses.

Subhyeh Ma'ani stood out by not only playing the "traditional role" of being a wife and a mother, but also becoming the owner and manager of two family-run businesses.

According to many women who wish to make it on their own, Ms. Ma'ani is considered a role model.

She was one of the three women appointed by His Majesty King Hussein to



Subhyeh Ma'ani

the 40-member Upper House of Parliament in November.

Other women senators include former Minister of Information Leila Sharaf and current Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf. Ms. Ma'ani started man-

aging the Arab Company for Medical and Agricultural Products and the Arab Supplier General Trading Company in 1967 — a success story that has continued ever since.

The death of Ms. Ma'ani's husband in 1981 did not stop her from pursuing her career while looking after a family of three children.

She believes that women can be financially independent and equally able to look after their families.

"I don't think it is the age anymore for women to stay at home and be content to look after their families, though I believe that women have a lot to deliver to the members of the family by supervising their education, their health, their national outlook and their loyalty to their nation," she told the Jordan Times on

Tuesday. "But nevertheless, I strongly believe that women should be economically independent, which reflects positively on their personality and character," Ms. Ma'ani added.

Although illiteracy among Jordanian women is decreasing, unemployment continues to be an obstacle in their pursuit of earning a decent living, said Ms. Ma'ani.

According to government statistics, unemployment among Jordanian men stood at 14.5 per cent, while for women it has risen to 34.3 per cent — mainly because of women's unequal access to economic resources.

However, Ms. Ma'ani said she believed women should pursue education and training in order to expand their opportunities

in the work force.

"Since women form 50 per cent of the world's population, they should play a major role in development, growth and the changes taking place," she said.

Several non-governmental organisations in Jordan have been active in supporting women in the field of business, especially the establishment of their own small- and medium-size enterprises.

Noor Al Hussein Foundation has been promoting women's economic activities through increasing their participation in the market force and supporting the establishment of businesses run solely by women.

"You might not have many businesswomen in Jordan, but you have a vast number of professionals... they are very successful, they are doing very well,"

Ms. Ma'ani said.

She said she could see Jordanian women totally independent in less than 10 years from now.

"I am optimistic. Women seem very keen to realise their personalities through their activities," she concluded.

According to a study conducted last year by two University of Jordan professors, 53,000 Jordanian families will be headed by women in 10 years, constituting 17 per cent of the total population. In 1996, 10 per cent of families had a woman as the head of the household.

The study, conducted with the participation of 514 women, demonstrated that 79.1 per cent of Jordanian women shoulder family responsibilities without the benefit of auxiliary support.

Tens of thousands defy Mugabe in Zimbabwe anti-government strike

HARARE (AFP) — Tens of thousands of workers defied beleaguered Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe Tuesday by backing a national strike seen as a direct political challenge to his government.

The protest was called by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) in an attempt to force the government to cut taxes and reduce prices.

Mr. Mugabe had laid his personal authority on the line by demanding the cancellation of the strike, but almost all industries in the capital remained closed and only skeleton services were operating in the city centre.

The state news agency reported that other urban centres around the country were also closed for business.

In the main towns of Bulawayo, Mutare, Gweru, Kadoma, Chinoyi and Masvingo most banks, shops and industries kept their doors shut.

"It is total madness to go ahead with the strike," Mr. Mugabe said on the eve of

the stayaway.

"They are playing politics. We no longer regard them as trade unions, but an opposition political party."

"They cannot try to be government and say 'no' to this tax and 'yes' to that tax, otherwise we cease to be a government," ZCTU leaders said they were not answerable to the president, but to their members, who are suffering economic hardships which they blame on government mismanagement.

Truckloads of heavily armed riot police were visible in parts of the city and helicopters periodically patrolled the skies over the capital.

Many schoolchildren were kept at home for fear that violence could erupt, as it did during January food-price riots in which shops were looted and at least five people killed.

But apart from isolated stone-throwing incidents there were no early reports of serious violence or clashes between police and strikers, who have been urged to stay in their homes

by the protest organisers.

There was no sign that veterans of the country's independence war would carry out their threat to march on — and possibly attack — the prosperous northern suburbs of the capital where most of the country's tiny white minority live.

Chairman of the war veterans' association Charles Hunzvi had said that if the stayaway took place his members "could very well" attack whites, whom the government has accused of instigating the unrest.

Ministers say white businessmen are stoking the flames of economic discontent in Zimbabwe in the hope of overthrowing the government because of its plan to seize some 1,500 white-owned farms for distribution to blacks.

But it was business as usual at the malls in the northern suburbs, with shopkeepers saying they were certain they would get word of any approach by the war veterans in time to close up and go home. Analysts say the success

of the strike despite threats and cajoling by Mr. Mugabe and his ministers is a strong warning to the government of the scale of discontent in the country.

"The government is saying 'Let's fight it out and see who wins'," said University of Zimbabwe political scientist John Makumbe.

"The people never lose. They may not have the army and bullets and tear gas but they win. We have a major crisis because the government can't actually afford to cut the taxes as the people are demanding because it needs the money desperately."

"Also it has been conceding all sorts of things in the past because of civic action by the people and it can't afford to be seen to do that again."

One of the concessions the government made in the face of protests last year was to pay large gratuities and pensions to war veterans — a move economists say is partly responsible for the financial crisis it now finds itself in.

Indonesian ruling party blasts foreign media on crisis coverage

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesia's ruling Golkar party Tuesday blasted the foreign media over its coverage of the crisis gripping the country.

"I have received many complaints from my constituents that the foreign media tend to exploit the Indonesian situation," Golkar executive Theo Sambuaga said, admonishing foreign correspondents at a press conference in Jakarta.

"I urge you to be more objective" in "covering Indonesia. You are so biased and you are not objective," he added, without giving

examples of offending reports.

Golkar executives also denied that politics was at the root of the Indonesian crisis, saying it was sparked purely by economic considerations.

"I do not buy that argument," Mr. Sambuaga added.

"As a matter of fact, the crisis is an economic crisis. In political terms, you can see as well as all of us here that the political agenda is running well," he said, referring to Indonesia's "democratic and constitutional system."

His comments came as a

1,000-member electoral committee, dominated by loyalists to President Suharto, meets in Jakarta to choose the country's president and vice president for the 1998-2003 term.

Mr. Suharto is set to be returned to office unopposed for a seventh consecutive five-year term.

"So in political terms we don't have any problem," Mr. Sambuaga said.

"Of course, we know that the people's aspirations are increasing, but we try, particularly from the Golkar side, to accommodate the demands of the people."

Two more Chinese dissidents arrested

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese police have arrested two more dissidents in a growing security clampdown ahead of a key parliament meeting in Beijing, a Hong Kong-based rights organisation said Tuesday.

Police in the northern Chinese city of Xian Monday evening arrested Zheng Baohe and the following morning picked up Zhang Jiankang, the information centre for Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said.

The two last week joined seven others in signing an open letter to the government demanding the exoneration of disgraced former Communist Party chief Zhao Ziyang, it said.

The centre also said that the Public Security Bureau in eastern Hefei city had informed family members that activist Shen Liangqing had been formally detained. Mr. Shen went missing on Feb. 25.

The reports could not immediately be confirmed.

At least three other dissidents in eastern China, including Lin Xiaoshu, Ma Lianggang and Shanghai's Yang Qinhong, are still believed to be in detention after a wave of arrests began last week.

Two others, Zhang Rujun and Mao Guoliang, were freed after being held briefly for questioning.

The approach of the annual session of the National People's Congress, which opened Thursday, has provoked a rash of open letters and petitions from dissidents demanding political reforms.

This year's meeting is particularly sensitive as it will install a new team of state leaders, including a new premier, parliamentary chief and vice president.

Zhao Ziyang — who has been held under virtual house arrest since the June 4, 1989, crackdown on the demonstrations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square — has become a powerful symbol of the crushed pro-democracy movement.

The former general secretary of the Communist Party was ousted immediately after the crackdown for having sympathised with the student protesters.



Russian President Boris Yeltsin (right) welcomes his new Secretary of the Security Council, Andrei Kokoshin, during their meeting. Mr. Yeltsin named defence aide Kokoshin, a civilian, as secretary of Russia's Security Council (Reuters photo)

Kokoshin takes over revamped Russian security council

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin Tuesday named Andrei Kokoshin as secretary of a revamped Russian security council, whose powers have been expanded in a shake-up of national security bodies, the Kremlin said.

"President Yeltsin today met at midday the new secretary of the security council, Andrei Kokoshin," said Mr. Yeltsin's personal

spokesman Sergei

Yastrzhembsky.

Mr. Kokoshin takes over from Ivan Rybkin who was named deputy prime minister Monday with responsibility for relations with members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, a loose grouping formed following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The Kremlin chief also scrapped the state military

inspectorate and the national defence council, also chaired by Mr. Yeltsin, ordering that their administrations be fused with that of the security council.

Observers said the move boosted the authority of the Security Council, which handles, among other questions, Moscow's difficult ties with the breakaway Caucasus republic of Chechnya.

Australian anti-Asia MP says Aboriginal landright claim sick joke

CANBERRA (AFP) — Anti-Asia MP Pauline Hanson Tuesday branded a planned landrights claim by traditional Aboriginal people over Australia's Parliament House a "sick joke".

The Ngunnawal people said they will lodge a claim over Canberra's new Parliament House and High Court buildings, saying some of their clan were born on Capitol Hill, where the structures stand, and the land is rightly theirs.

But Ms. Hanson, the maverick independent who provoked uproar with her campaign to slash Asian immigration and Aboriginal funding, said it was ridiculous.

"What an absolute joke," she told reporters here. "I'm sick of hearing about

all these native title claims. Parliament House and this Capital Hill belong to all Australians."

She said it was hypocritical to try to use a birth certificate to support a claim for land.

"I have heard of other cases that if Aboriginals are taken to court they don't necessarily have to have a birth certificate because they are not given out," she said.

"The hypocrisy of the whole lot ... it's good in one instance, it's not good in the other."

A spokeswoman for the National Native Title Tribunal, which deals with Aboriginal claims on land, said no claim had been lodged yet on behalf of the Ngunnawal people.

The claimants have said

they expect a backlash, but that they want to gain recognition of their culture.

"We're not going to move into them (the buildings) or squat them or anything," a spokesman for the clan said.

"We're not into taking people's backyards or anything. I'd just like the community in general to know that we are still around and we'd like to share our culture around Canberra and (the) districts."

Support for Ms. Hanson's One Nation party has plummeted since it peaked at 13.5 per cent in the middle of last year.

In more recent months her support has dived as low as three per cent amid signs of disunity and resignations within One Nation.

Starr probing former Lewinsky lawyer

WASHINGTON (R) — Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr is asking a federal judge here to grant him, through a subpoena, notes, case files and diary entries from Monica Lewinsky's former lawyer, according to a report in Tuesday's Los Angeles Times.

"Despite the legal privilege that normally protects the confidentiality of communications between attorneys and their clients, Mr. Starr also is seeking potentially to question the lawyer, Francis D. Carter, before a federal grand jury," the newspaper reported.

Mr. Carter helped prepare the affidavit submitted by Ms. Lewinsky in January denying that the former White House intern had a sexual relationship with President Bill Clinton.

Ms. Lewinsky was driven to

Mr. Carter's office by Mr. Clinton friend Vernon Jordan, the Times said.

Mr. Jordan was due to testify Tuesday before the grand jury investigating whether Mr. Clinton had a sexual relationship with Ms. Lewinsky and urged her to lie about it under oath.

"At the same time," the newspaper reported, "Mr. Starr is facing sophisticated manoeuvring from Mr. Clinton's lawyers, who are using the prospect of attorney-client privilege and executive privilege in an attempt to block the questioning of some White House officials."

Mr. Carter's subpoenaed notes "could reflect what Lewinsky told him about her relationship with Mr. Clinton, how the affidavit was prepared or the comments of Jordan," the Times reported.

Italian accused of killing and eating daughter

FOGGIA, Italy (AFP) — A girl has accused her father of murdering, burning and eating his sister, judicial officials said Tuesday.

The 10-year-old girl told a judge at a court in Foggia, in northern Italy, that her father, who is being detained in prison on a charge of murdering his

wife, had also killed her sister.

The 30-year-old man, whose identity was not released, was arrested last year over the murder of his wife at a hospital in 1994.

A new warrant has been issued over the allegation of killing his daughter, then aged two, a year earlier.

Debate on Kohl's candidacy must end, says close aide

BONN (AFP) — A close aide and potential successor to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl called Tuesday for an end to the debate on whether Mr. Kohl should lead his party into September's general elections.

Wolfgang Schaueble, 55, told the public television channel ZDF that "there has already been enough debate on candidacy in Germany, now enough is enough."

Social Democrat Gerhard Schröder's landslide victory in Sunday's Lower Saxony elections reawakened doubts about whether Mr. Kohl, 67, is the right person to lead his ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU) into elections for a fifth term.

Mr. Schaueble, who back in October was touted as a possible successor to Mr. Kohl, said that the CDU had long decided to back the chancellor.

"We are concerning ourselves with the matter in hand (the elections), which in itself is a sufficiently complex and important affair," he continued.

Mr. Kohl said Monday that he intended running the electoral campaign "personally and forcefully."

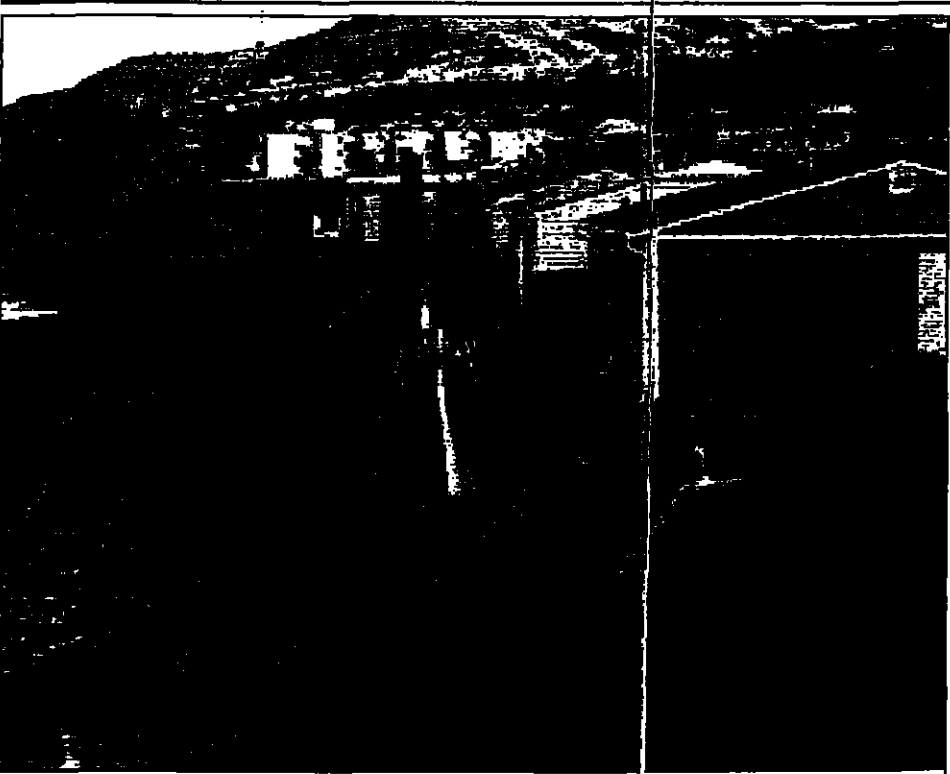
But veteran CDU deputy and Mr. Kohl critic, Heiner Geissler, 68, fell short of giving the chancellor his undivided support, saying late Monday on ZDF that Mr. Kohl "must do as anyone with responsibilities would do and ask himself what would be the best way forward."

"The key is in his hands, it's up to him to decide," Mr. Geissler said, adding that Mr. Schaueble would "make an excellent candidate."

Mr. Geissler nonetheless noted of Mr. Kohl that "nothing can be done without him — or against him either."

An opinion poll carried out for ARD public television showed that 52 per cent of those asked would vote for Mr. Schröder if they could directly choose the chancellor, compared to just 24 per cent for Mr. Kohl.

The German chancellor is elected by parliament.



A home perched on a disintegrating cliff above the Pacific Ocean leans into mid air. A total of nine houses have been red-tagged and evacuated as the cliff continues to erode due to the effects of heavy El Niño storms (Reuters photo)

مكتبة لاني

Police set to foil Nigerian opposition as rivals rally for Abacha

LAGOS (AFP) — Armed police Tuesday sealed off a Lagos venue to foil a rally to oppose any candidature by Nigerian military ruler Sani Abacha in civilian presidential polls, while his backers gathered in Abuja.

About 150 policemen cordoned off the Yaba motor park in the commercial capital, where two police armoured personnel carriers had already been posted, amid warnings against the organisation of a banned protest.

Four other armoured cars were stationed before the Lagos office of national headquarters of the police in readiness for deployment, witnesses said.

In the federal capital Abuja, however, thousands of people gathered for a rally to back General Abacha as a possible candidate in polls due in August, as part of his tightly controlled transition programme back to civilian rule.

However, state television and radio plans to provide live coverage of the pro-Abacha event, intended to have all the allure of a two-day carnival, did not get off to a good start, with only 30 seconds of footage shown.

Lagos residents said that armed police had also taken over open fields and playing grounds close to the motor park, which could be used as alternative venues for the banned rally there.

The anti-Abacha protest has been called by a coalition of 26 pro-democracy and human rights organisations, under the umbrella of the national United Action for Democracy (UAD) movement.

Organisers said that they hoped for a crowd of five million at the rally, scheduled to start at 3:00 p.m. (1400 GMT).

Lagos State Police Commissioner Abubakar Tsav told journalists Monday here that any rally would be illegal and frilly dealt with in the city, which

was crippled by strikes in the wake of the 1993-94 holding and annulling of presidential elections and the jailing of the presumed winner, businessman Moshood Abiola.

Thousands of people converged on the national parade ground in Abuja, where organisers of the pro-Abacha show were expecting two million people. Musicians and artists have been invited to perform, while foreign guests have been invited.

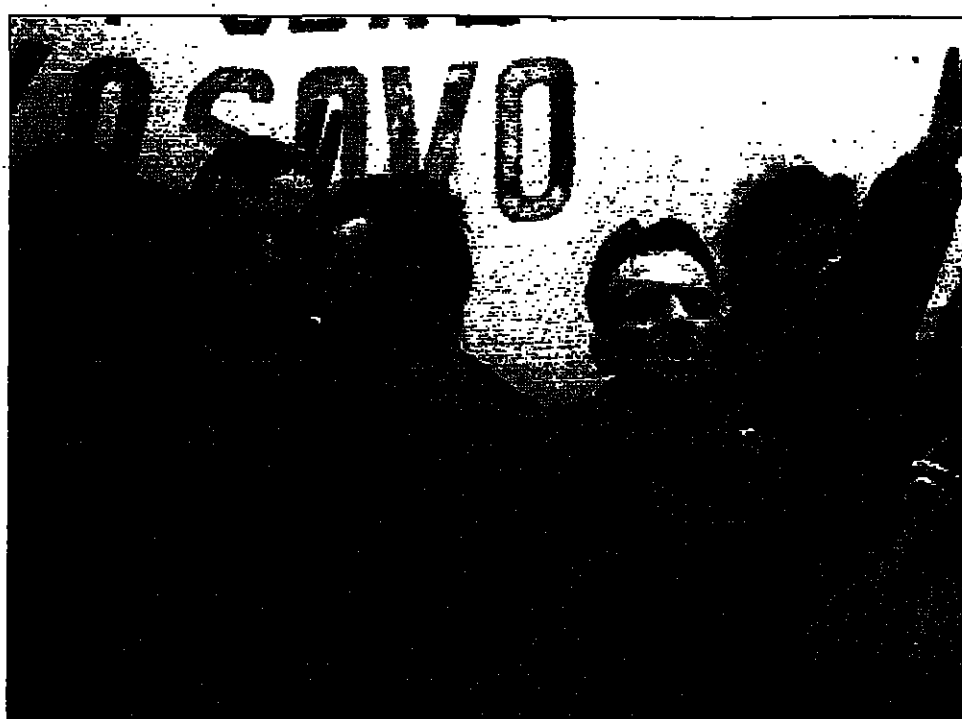
Gen. Abacha was due to address the rally via giant screens from inside his "Aso Rock" offices, the private Guardian newspaper reported Tuesday, while at least three former heads of state were expected to attend.

The military ruler has not formally announced that he intends to run for the presidency, due to be taken up by an elected civilian on Oct. 1, and his regime has meanwhile come under strong domestic and foreign pressure over its human rights record. The national television (NTA) and radio, failed to get coverage of the Abuja event going because of technical difficulties, with a presenter saying the TV would try again later in the day.

In Lagos, meanwhile, unexpectedly heavy rain flooded most streets in a thunderstorm which lasted for almost an hour.

Government officials have said that they are not involved in the Abuja rally. Nevertheless several state agencies, including security services, have been mobilised to ensure the success of the carnival, where people attending were to include youths from five other West African countries — Ghana, Ivory Coast, Niger, Libya and Liberia.

Workers and students in Abuja have also been told to stay away from work and classes Tuesday and Wednesday.



Albanians wave the red and black double-headed Eagle flag of Albania as they stage a protest outside the European Union's Council office in Brussels. Several hundred Albanians demonstrated, demanding an end to oppression as the EU warned Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic against a crackdown in Kosovo (Reuters photo)

Mir space walk repair mission frustrated by stubborn hatch

MOSCOW (AFP) — The accident-prone Mir space station suffered a fresh setback Tuesday when a jammed hatch prevented cosmonauts from undertaking a space walk to carry out running repairs to a damaged solar panel.

Flight control cancelled the six-hour space walk by Russian cosmonauts Tatjana Solov'yeva and Nikolai Budarin after the pair were unable to unscrew a bolt in the hatch leading out into space, space flight Director Vladimir Solov'yev said.

The mission to repair the panel, which was damaged when a supply craft collided with Mir last June, has now been put back to early April, Mr. Solov'yev told Russia's NTV television channel.

The cancellation of the space walk is the latest in a litany of mishaps which have beset the 12-year-old space station, which last year suffered the near-catastrophic collision with the cargo craft, a fire and a series of computer breakdowns.

Mr. Solov'yev said the hatch bolts were firmly screwed into place by the previous crew at the end of a space walk and that the

cosmonauts Tuesday broke three spanners while trying to open one of them.

"We have no direct reprimands for the crew, but there will surely be a full analysis conducted of the incident," Mr. Solov'yev said.

The stubborn hatch was the second problem to beset Tuesday's space walk. Minutes before the cosmonauts were due to begin opening the outer hatch, mission control announced a delay, saying the cosmonauts had not properly sealed another hatch separating the airlock through which they have to pass to go outside, from the rest of the station.

The problem was quickly resolved by U.S. astronaut Andrew Thomas who sealed the hatch properly from inside Mir, only to leave the cosmonauts frustrated by the outer hatch.

Mission control gave Musabayev and Budarin nearly two and a half hours past the 0130 GMT start time before announcing that the space walk had been cancelled.

The space walk will be scheduled so that the cosmonauts could fix the damaged solar panel to the sur-

face of the space station. The panel, which was partially broken off when the Progress cargo craft collided with Mir on June 25, poses a threat to antennas and instruments mounted on the station.

Space flight centre spokeswoman Vera Medvedkova said the failed space walk would not effect power supplies to the space station as the solar panel was already out of action.

She said a new supply vessel, due to dock with Mir on March 17, would bring a new set of tools to help the cosmonauts open the hatch.

The Mir space station is to be replaced by an international space station, a project involving Russia, the United States, the European Space Agency, Canada and Japan. Its first module is to be launched on June 30.

EU warns Milosevic over Kosovo crisis

BRUSSELS (AFP) — The European Union Tuesday issued a strong warning for Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to restore the Kosovo Albanians' autonomy status.

"Milosevic must open a dialogue of peace with the Albanians of Kosovo ... and restore its autonomy," the EU commissioner for external relations, Hans van den Broek, told reporters.

"If he does not act, he must not be surprised if others do so in his place," Mr. van den Broek said after a meeting with the prime minister of Bosnia's Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik.

Mr. Milosevic repealed Kosovo's autonomy status in 1989 when he was president of Serbia, triggering

strong protests from the province's ethnic Albanian population.

Meanwhile, Britain, which currently holds the EU presidency, appealed to the authorities in Belgrade and to Albanian community leaders in Kosovo to settle their differences through dialogue.

As British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook prepared to discuss the crisis in Serbia's Kosovo region with Yugoslav officials in Belgrade, the EU statement strongly condemned the recourse to violence in the province.

The EU deplored the fact that police intervention was directly responsible for casualties among the civilian population, the statement said.

It urged "repressive"

Serbian security forces to respect human rights as they went about their duties and asked "all sides to abstain from resorting to violence."

The statements were prompted by four days of clashes between ethnic Albanian demonstrators and Serbian police, who continued their crackdown Monday. Twenty people died in the initial clashes in Drenica.

The political committee of the EU, a group of top foreign ministry officials from all 15 member countries, were to discuss the situation in Kosovo Tuesday.

Mr. van den Broek said he hoped the meeting would formulate "clear recommendations on the supplementary measures to take" to bring Belgrade to the negotiating table.

Draft dodger survives suicide bid

MOSCOW (AFP) — A draft dodger threw himself in front of a train in a suicide bid on the Moscow subway Tuesday and suffered head and chest injuries, Interfax reported, quoting police.

The 20-year-old man, wanted by police since April 10 for avoiding military service, threw himself off the platform at Mendelevskaya metro station in central Moscow as a train was approaching.

The power was turned off for seven minutes as he was lifted from the track, and he was then rushed to hospital, police said.

Desertion, draft dodging and suicide are common in the Russian army, where young conscripts are frequently ill-treated by senior troops. Some 40,000 young men refused to do their military service last year.

NATO set for fresh talks on new HQ

BRUSSELS (AFP) — NATO ambassadors will hold another round of talks Wednesday on choosing a new headquarters for the alliance, after a previous meeting in January failed to reach a consensus.

The matter has already provoked serious differences of opinion between the allies, mainly over the projected cost of around \$343 million.

Despite carrying out a one-month study since the January meeting, there is a strong possibility that the ambassadors will call for further discussions aimed at reducing the cost, one diplomat said.

A study last summer

came up with four options, one of which — to transfer to a recently-built but semi-disused military hospital in the north of Brussels — was rejected due to its \$500-million price tag.

The other options were the construction of a brand new building, the renovation and expansion of the current headquarters, or a gradual replacement of the existing building, section by section.

The dilapidated state of the present headquarters in east Brussels has been deemed inadequate, especially for the planned arrival of new members — the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland.

Irish army use controlled explosions on suspected car bomb

DUBLIN (AFP) — Irish army bomb disposal experts carried out two controlled explosions Tuesday on a suspected car bomb discovered by police Monday in a haybarn just south of the border with Northern Ireland, a spokesman said.

Police believe the discovery of the car has foiled a plan by the extreme Continuity Army Council (CAC) — a splinter group of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to carry out a bombing attack in Northern Ireland.

A spokesman said the car, a Renault 21 with false Northern Ireland number plates, was covered with hay and straw in the barn on a disused farm at Annaghvackey, Hackballcross, County Louth.

The area, which was sealed off overnight by police and army units, is about a mile south of the border with County Armagh in Northern Ireland. Previous searches in the area have uncovered explosives, arms and ammunition.

Police said the device appeared to be almost completed with a homemade explosive mix in the boot. No arrests have been made.

Last week police foiled another attack when a 250-pound bomb was found after a tip-off in a field at Redhills, County Cavan, a few miles south of the border.

The CAC strongly opposes the current peace talks and has been responsible for recent bomb attacks in Moira and Portadown in Northern Ireland.

Pakistan warns India against misadventure as nationalists top polls

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan has warned that Pakistan will react strongly to any "misadventure" by India, where Hindu nationalists and their allies Tuesday looked set to top elections.

Mr. Khan said in a statement to the National Assembly late Monday that BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party, Indian People's Party) leaders had made "some statements which are vitiating the atmosphere and creating doubts in the minds of our people about Indian intentions and postures."

"Yet we are not inclined to invest these statements with any credibility. Election gimmickry could possibly be the motive behind them," the

official Associated Press of Pakistan quoted his statement as saying.

However, Pakistan will be keeping a careful watch, the minister added. "If there is any misadventure by India then there will be a very swift and telling reply."

His statement also accused Indian intelligence of masterminding recent violence in Pakistan that has left more than 30 people dead including two Iranian engineers gunned down in Karachi.

Its rivals accuse the BJP of wanting to replace India's secular constitution with a theocracy. The BJP has pledged to arm India with nuclear weapons and has vowed to take back the part of Kashmir held by Pakistan.

Intervention force captures Sierra Leone town from rebels

FREETOWN (AFP) — The Nigerian-led intervention force ECOMOG has captured the north Sierra Leone town of Makeni, where forces of an ousted junta and their rebel allies had grouped since ECOMOG evicted them from the capital last month, various sources said Tuesday.

"The opposing forces had fled the town ahead of ECOMOG advances," said Michael Conteh, a priest in the capital in radio contact with missionaries in

Makeni, 140 kilometres northeast of the capital.

ECOMOG's commander in Sierra Leone, Colonel Maxwell Khobe, confirmed his men had late Monday taken control of the town, one of the largest in the West African country, reliable sources in Freetown told AFP.

"We are free. Great thanks to God!" Michael Conteh quoted a missionary among 50 religious workers trapped in the town with dwindling sup-

plies of food, water and medicine as saying.

The trapped workers included Italians, Indians, Irish, Germans and Filipinos as well as Sierra Leoneans. "It was very timely as many of the workers had developed malaria and high fever and there was very little drugs left," Michael Conteh added.

"All is now quiet and thousands of civilians who had fled into the bush came out waving leaves and

clapping to greet the victorious ECOMOG troops," Michael Conteh said.

ECOMOG troops were Tuesday reported to be engaged in an intensive mopping-up operation in Makeni. The town was said to be calm after the looting of many properties.

A reporter on the scene said dozens of houses were destroyed by fire, with some still smouldering, and that dozens of decomposed corpses littered the streets.

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Editorial and advertising offices:
 Jordan Press Foundation,
 University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.
 Telephones: 5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585
 Facsimile: 5696183
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Resolution with no respect

THE RESOLUTION on Iraq adopted unanimously Monday by the U.N. Security Council strikes us as unfair and unbalanced for a variety of reasons. For starters the resolution gives Iraq no credit whatsoever for cooperating with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and making his visit to Baghdad a success. As the saying goes, it takes two to tango; the fact that the Iraqi regime did lend total support for Annan's initiative should have been more clearly recognised. We say this because we believe that Iraq should be encouraged to cooperate even further with the international community just as elementary diplomatic niceties would require some recognition of the cooperative spirit of the Iraqi government in this instance.

On more substantive grounds the resolution leaves much to be desired at least in the sense that it lacked any provision on who would determine if Iraq has violated the resolution. Normally the Security Council should be the final arbiter of whether Baghdad has met its obligations or not. The way the resolution is worded, the issue is left without a proper solution. Even more ominous is the absence of any language on the need to go back to the council before Iraq is subjected to the so-called "severe consequences." By leaving such determination up for grabs, Washington may "exploit" this loophole to launch a military strike against Iraq any time it deems necessary.

The fact that U.S. State Department Spokesman James Rubin stated unequivocally, in the wake of the adoption of the resolution, that the U.S. would act unilaterally and without recourse to the council members suggests that more trouble awaits the international community. "Never mind the resolution," Rubin said, "the U.S. would act without consulting with the Security Council if Iraq reneges on the Baghdad deal."

These are indeed very disturbing words. Coming as they do from a U.S. official makes us wonder if Washington has not become already the prime violator of the very resolution that it has so heavily supported. What can we expect from the Iraqis in terms of respecting the resolution when its sponsor effectively says, never mind the resolution, we will act anyway?

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Mahmoud Jbour voiced strong support for His Majesty King Hussein's mediation between Washington and Baghdad saying such a move could bring an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people. It is true that Russia, China and France, all U.N. Security Council permanent members sympathise with the Iraqi position and oppose U.S. threats of a military strike, but it is also important that Baghdad end the state of hostility with Washington to guarantee a favourable vote at the council's meetings when the Iraqi or other Arab countries' questions come up for debate, said the writer. The U.S. has been harbouring enmity towards North Korea and China but such enmity did not prevent officials from these countries from holding meetings to solve their problems, he noted. The writer said a dialogue between Baghdad and Washington should be able to solve many problems which military confrontation failed to address. Through dialogue and direct contacts the Iraqis can address the American public and relay their views, benefiting from the American media which can play a role in conveying the Arab country's complaints and grievances and can also serve as a catalyst to bring American and Iraqi views closer.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Saleh Qallab said the Iraqi-U.N. agreement on the work of arms inspectors allowed only for the delaying of the American military strike on Iraq and did not remove the coming attack. Qallab said the U.S. has been planning the attack and disintegration of the Arab region for at least two decades and this is their chance to achieve their dream. The Americans were careful to send Annan to Baghdad to conclude this deal in order to persuade Security Council members opposing its military strike to agree to the attack when and if Saddam Hussein violates any of its provisions, according to the writer. He said the U.S. can, by different means, provoke Iraq into violating the accord and can easily create an excuse for launching the attack. The writer said the Iraqi leadership should be very careful and should abide by the terms of the agreement and avoid provoking Washington if it is keen on avoiding further devastation, more sufferings for its people and possible disintegration of the nation.

Washington Watch

Unfinished business

By Dr. James J. Zogby

IN THE end, President Clinton did the right thing and deferred to the United Nations Security Council in an effort to diffuse a dangerous standoff with Iraq. It had been dangerous for the United States to be out on a limb virtually alone threatening "sustained and decisive" bombing against Iraq. The negative consequences to the people of that country and to U.S. allies and interests were too great. And the prospects of any positive outcome were, at best, negligible.

From the outset, the president had said the confrontation was not between the United States and Iraq, it was between the United Nations and Iraq. And he repeatedly affirmed that a diplomatic solution, was the preferred solution. Therefore, when Secretary General Kofi Annan succeeded in securing written Iraqi compliance with weapons inspections, the administration could not but accept the agreement.

No sooner had the success been announced in Baghdad, however, than Republican Senate leaders began attacking both the secretary general and the president. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott criticised Clinton for having "subcontracted U.S. foreign policy out to the U.N." Other senators began plotting to make Clinton's "weakness" an issue to exploit in the 1998 elections.

The blatant partisanship of these attacks was as shocking as was the absurdity of the arguments used by these senators. For example, the night the agreement was reached in Iraq, I debated Republican Senator Arlen Specter on CNN's Crossfire. Specter, parroting the party line, had just announced that he would introduce a "feel-good, do-nothing" senate resolution calling for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

Struck by the senator's remarkable inconsistency on this issue, I reminded him of his record. In 1990, he, like many of his colleagues, had visited Baghdad and supported the Iraqi leader. More recently, I noted that on Jan. 28 of this year, the senator had co-sponsored the Senate bill that was to authorise the president to use force against Iraq. But on Feb. 12 Specter said he would not support the effort for three reasons:

- * after attending four meetings in his state he found that his constituents were not supportive and "had concerns about our goals" in Iraq;

- * recalling his travels throughout the Middle East, he noted that many in the region had commented on our "abuse of power" and our "arrogance" in dealing with other countries; and

- * he said, "we do not have the cooperation of others" in this attack on Iraq.

Now, less than two weeks later, with the secretary general of the United Nations having secured an agreement, the senator had somehow decided that it would be neither "arrogant" nor "abusive" for the Republican Senate to criticise the president and the United Nations. When one of the show's hosts, Robert Novak, asked Specter how he felt about the suffering of Iraq's people, he indicated no sympathy because, he said, "they are responsible for Saddam!" This Rambo-like mentality is rampant among some of the so-called "experts" as well. With the crisis somewhat subsided, they have allowed their fantasies to run wild. For the most part, their views share a number of common denominators: they have no understanding of the reality of Iraq or the broader Middle East; what they propose are largely attempts to transpose Reagan-era Afghanistan and Nicaragua adventures onto Iraq; since none of these schemes will ever be used, their proponents can, without any sense of responsibility, propose whatever they will. A former U.S. ambassador, Edward Peck, made the most incisive comment of the week. When asked by the host of one television show to evaluate one of these right-wing proposals, Peck said, "Well, I've been hearing such things from a number of people — people who don't know anything about Iraq, which, of course, is nothing to be ashamed of, unless they're talking about Iraq."

But with little shame and even less knowledge and responsibility, the Senate and their supporters will continue to challenge the president and the secretary general. The administration will resist these efforts, but resisting is not enough. Kofi Annan created a framework for the res-

olution of the crisis, but the crisis has not yet passed.

Iraq will now be tested, and it must comply. If it were wise, Iraq would not only move decisively to comply and clear all of its outstanding files with the weapons inspection teams, it would also display a genuine readiness to resolve other outstanding U.N. resolutions. The government in Baghdad should recognise recent gains in ending regional and international isolation. Through reform and reordered priorities, the government of Iraq could help turn a new page in its regional relations, if it were wise. However, the United Nations and the United States will also be tested. If Iraq complies, the United Nations must signal its readiness to lift economic sanctions at a specified time. The Iraqi people have paid too dearly and too long for the crimes of the regime. While an arms control regimen and some element of containment and deterrence will remain in place indefinitely, food and medicine are not enough. The country must be allowed to rebuild its civilian infrastructure (water, sewage, electricity, health care, educational facilities, etc.).

For its part, the United States must be more forthcoming in its relations with the region. This past crisis should have made clear that the United States has serious work to do to win the "hearts and minds" and trust of the Arab people. This is the battle that the United States must wage and win if its allies and interests are to be secure. The weapons in this war are justice and balance — and they must be applied across the board. A good place to begin, of course, is with a determined and dramatic new approach to the peace process. This will require more than half steps and small percentages (13 per cent is as much an insult to Palestinian aspirations as 9 per cent). The United States must declare its principles and its vision for the future: an end to settlements on occupied land, the establishment of a Palestinian state, security for all based on normalised ties and justice, and a region free of all threats of war and weapons of mass destruction.

With the most recent crisis still fresh and wounds still open there is no time like the present for real leadership to help move the region toward peace.

Tehran-Riyadh rapprochement: A sign of things to come

By G.H. Jansen

WHILE THE world focused on the crisis between Iraq and the U.S., there was a potentially far more important development in the Gulf. This was the unprecedented rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the two leading local powers, alienated since Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini took power in Tehran and proclaimed a universal Islamic revolution.

On Feb. 21, as U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan began his critical mission to Baghdad, former Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani, now head of the influential Expediency Council, commenced a 12-day visit to Saudi Arabia. He began by meeting King Fahd and Crown Prince Abdullah. On the agenda were the Iraq crisis, the falling price of oil, Afghanistan, the Middle East peace process and Shia prisoners in Saudi jails.

Tehran and Riyadh agreed that the confrontation between Baghdad and Washington should be resolved through diplomatic means. While agreeing that Iraq must implement Security Council resolutions, both insisted that Israel should be compelled to do the same.

Tehran's charm offensive has ended its regional isolation which followed the revolution and has encouraged non-Arab Muslim states to reconcile.

As the largest producers in the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Saudi Arabia and Iran are eager to raise and stabilise oil prices in a period of glut and to coordinate stands on the not-so-gradual return of Iraqi crude to the market following the U.N. decision to more than double the amount of oil Baghdad may sell from \$4.28 billion to \$10.4 billion a year. But they had to agree to disagree over how to achieve higher prices in a stable market for Iran's suggestion that Saudi Arabia cut its present production.

Saudi Arabia initiated the reconciliation process last year when it sent an envoy to Tehran ahead of the installation of Mohammed Khatami as Iran's new reformist president. Reconciliation became rapprochement when Crown Prince Abdullah and a high-ranking Saudi delegation attended the summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) held in Tehran last December.

This development could have great significance on the religious plane.

Good relations between orthodox Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia and heterodox Shia Iran could defuse the latest contretemps in the 14-century-old antagonism between these competing streams of Islam. Last weekend the depth of the rapprochement was demonstrated when Rafsanjani was permitted to visit the sensitive Shia eastern province, of Saudi Arabia, where lie the oil fields, and speak to local leaders about coexistence between their often rebellious people and the Sunni ruling establishment.

One must recall that Ayatollah Khomeini called the Saudi Shiites to arms when he launched his Islamic revolution. Today no one in Tehran speaks of exporting the revolution. The talk is of reconciliation with Iran's neighbours, formerly the target of Khomeini's insurrectionist ideology.

Because of this new status quo policy Riyadh will rest assured that Tehran will neither try to disrupt the coming pilgrimage with anti-U.S. protests nor extend moral or financial support to fundamentalists seeking to attack U.S. diplomatic premises or military installations in the kingdom.

Commenting on the rapprochement, Tehran Radio said "relations between the two countries are entering a new stage in which mutual cooperation will increase dramatically."

Tehran has not confined its reconciliation campaign to Saudi Arabia. Recently Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi, made a tour of the Gulf, and his deputy Sayid Muhammad Sader, met with His Majesty King Hussein to confer on the Gulf crisis. Since Jordan resumed diplomatic relations with Iran in 1992, after a 12-year suspension, contacts have been established on many levels, including tourism. In the past four months, 20,000 Iranians have visited Jordan.

Tehran's charm offensive has ended its regional isolation which followed the revolution and has encouraged non-Arab Muslim states to reconcile. This should enable Shia Iran to play a positive role in the overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim world during its five-year tenure as president of the OIC.

Looked at in a wider perspective, the Iran-Saudi rapprochement is part of a regional tendency of coming-together.

Looked at in a wider perspective, the Iran-Saudi rapprochement is part of a regional tendency of coming-together. This centripetal force would seem to be prevailing over the previously centrifugal forces. Credit

for this development should go to an unwitting U.S. and its local ally, Israel, or perhaps, more realistically, this should be put the other way around.

The Arabs feel themselves threatened by the frank and open alliance of the anti-Islamic and anti-Arab World superpower, with the regional superpower, Israel. This has driven the Arabs together in the premise that if they don't hang together to confront this malign menace they will hang separately. The theme song of West Asian politics at present could very well be, in the words of a popular song of the fifties, "Baby, it's cold outside." So let us stay together to combine our warmth — and strength.

This is why Syria has become the moving spirit in the region-wide coming-together. For Syria feels especially lonely and isolated, neither at war nor peace with the U.S. and Israel. Syrian anxiety has been heightened by talk in Israel that in the absence of a viable peace process Israel no longer needs to show restraint towards Syria in order to not antagonise the other Arabs. Thus, Israel might just as well attack Syria and take more territory from it in the Golan province — from which Israel withdrew in 1974 — so Israel could threaten Damascus if the Syrian-tolerated Islamic resistance continues to attack Israeli targets in southern Lebanon, the remaining Arab-Israeli hostile front.

In the past year there has been a reconciliation of a sort between Syria and Iraq, although these two countries represent long-competing groups within the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party and are traditional enemies. Two border crossings have been opened, trade has begun and Syria supported Iraq against the U.S. in the latest confrontation.

"Traditional" Arab-Iranian antagonisms have been set aside to achieve the normalisation of relations between Iran and the Gulf Cooperation Council — except for the United Arab Emirates which still resents Iran's seizure of two small islands, the Tunbs, in the mouth of the Gulf of Hormuz.

The threat of a U.S. "Desert Thunder" offensive against Iraq, again unwittingly, gave a push to the regional get-together, to the dismay of both the U.S. and Israel. Indeed all the countries in the area, except Kuwait and perhaps Bahrain, but including Turkey, refused to grant their territory for air attacks on Iraq. For this stand, Iraq has expressed its gratitude, particularly because it could not have been easy for Saudi Arabia and the small Gulf states to say "no" to their U.S. "protector."

Yet another traditional enmity that is waning is that between Turkey and Iran. Especially since the fanatical and suspicious secularists among the Turkish generals have been assured by the new leaders in Iran — even though these leaders remain mullahs — that Iran is, at the moment, not interested in exporting militant Islam.

Britain's Iraq policy

To the editor:

LIKE MANY other countries around the world, the United Kingdom has warmly welcomed the agreement signed by the U.N. secretary-general last week in Baghdad. Despite what some commentators have said to the contrary, our aim throughout this dispute has been to settle it peacefully and diplomatically and we are delighted with what the secretary-general has finally achieved. We now want to see the agreement effectively implemented on the ground in Iraq.

We well understand the strong opposition that was expressed in Jordan and other countries of the region to using force against Iraq. Our profound wish has also been to avoid the use of force. But we believed strongly that without the threat of force we would never succeed in persuading the government of Iraq to agree to a satisfactory settlement. It appears that this was also the view of Kofi Annan, the U.N. secretary-general. In his opening remarks on returning to the U.N. on Feb. 24, Mr. Annan said: "I will start by thanking President Clinton and Prime Minister Blair for being perfect U.N. peacekeepers." As he said, "you can do a lot more with diplomacy when it is backed by firmness and force."

It is worth recalling that the origins of this latest crisis lay in the refusal of President Saddam Hussein to cooperate with the United Nations and allow U.N. inspectors to inspect so-called presidential sites in Iraq. This followed a similar crisis manufactured by President Saddam Hussein last November.

The need for the United Nations inspection teams to have full and unrestricted access throughout Iraq is not a matter of minor importance. The U.N. teams have already discovered huge quantities of chemical and biological weapons in Iraq. Many of these were discovered long after Iraq had claimed that it no longer possessed such weapons. The Iraqi government has lied, cheated, deceived and concealed. It has also used chemical weapons against Iran and against its own people. Its word is not to be trusted. That is why it remains vital for the peoples and countries of the region and for the whole world that the U.N. should be able to carry out its task effectively and ensure that all remaining weapons of mass destruction in Iraq are destroyed or rendered harmless. We cannot, unfortunately, rely on Iraqi promises in this regard.

Many have made the point that after seven years it is surely time for sanctions against Iraq to be lifted. We agree. But the timing of this depends upon Iraq. Once Iraq complies with U.N. resolutions and the U.N. inspectors are able to certify that the threat from Iraqi weapons of mass destruction has been removed, sanctions will be lifted. But this will only come about through complete cooperation with the U.N., not through confrontation.

Meanwhile, we have always been determined that the impact of sanctions on the Iraqi people should be minimised. For this reason, as long ago as 1991, the United Kingdom tabled a resolution at the Security Council to allow Iraq to sell oil to purchase food and medicines and other humanitarian supplies. Sadly, however, the Iraqi regime refused to implement it and went on refusing this and similar attempts for nearly four years. As a result, it was not until 1995 that the Security Council succeeded in passing what has become known as the oil-for-food resolution, 986. Even then the Iraqi regime continued to oppose implementation of the resolution for more than another year. And when they did finally agree to implement it, they lowered their own spending on food, medicine and other humanitarian goods for the Iraqi people, diverting the money round to build new presidential palaces and provide other luxuries for Saddam Hussein and his family.

Following a report by the U.N. secretary-general, Britain acted last month to draft a new humanitarian resolution, the effect of which is to more than double the amount of oil Iraq is allowed to export to enable it to purchase humanitarian goods. This resolution was finally adopted on Feb. 19. We hope that this time Iraq will implement it quickly, and without obstruction.

I might also note that the United Kingdom is the second largest aid donor in the world to Iraq, that is, in providing humanitarian aid to the Iraqi people. Since 1991, we have given over \$160 million in aid, much of it specifically targeted at children.

No country outside the region has a longer history of close relations with Iraq than Britain. No-one more than we would like to see it return to prosperity and to play its rightful role in the world community. But this depends on Iraq's own actions. So long as Iraq continues to try to maintain weapons of mass destruction, so long as it continues to threaten its neighbours and sections of its own people, so long as it refuses to comply with U.N. resolutions and seeks confrontation rather than cooperation with the international community and the U.N., sanctions are bound to continue, and Iraq will remain ostracised and isolated. Let us hope that the agreement signed last week by the U.N. secretary-general will not only endure and prove effective, but that it signals a change of heart by the Iraqi regime. Sadly on past form it is difficult to be optimistic. We shall therefore continue to judge Iraq by its actions and not by its words.

Christopher Battiscombe
 British Ambassador to Jordan

كنا مع العراق

Edzard Reuter at 70: Daimler's former boss still outspoken

By Christian Boehmer

STUTTGART — Edzard Reuter at 70 continues to be a figure who defies any easy definition, and he is proving in his retirement to be just as thornily outspoken as during his long career at Daimler-Benz.

Over the years he has been looked on not only as a corporate leader, but also as a world economic analyst, potential foreign minister for a Social Democratic government, art collector, sponsor of sports. He simply did not fit easily into other people's ideas.

Now, as an author of his memoirs, he is proving to be equally uncomfortable. His "Schein und Wirklichkeit" (Appearance and Reality), which is just out on the book market is a no-holds-barred criticism of the powerful concern, Daimler, which he had led from 1987-1995.

Reuter, who turned 70 on February 16, has apparently still not gotten over the manner in which he had left as CEO of Daimler almost three years ago. The criticism, some of it personal, has left behind deep scars.

Scarcely any other top German corporate leader has fallen from grace so quickly as he has. After a few years in which he has shown extreme restraint in his comments about Daimler-Benz, Reuter in his book describes in detail the company and the people at the top.

It is not a flattering picture, either. Even in his own time at the company there were power struggles

which took place while urgent corporate decisions kept being shunted aside.

Reuter, son of post-war West Berlin's legendary Social Democratic mayor Ernst Reuter (1889-1953), joined Daimler in 1964. For a long time his turf there was finances and planning. By contrast he never gained any experience in actual business operations during his rise.

A lawyer by training, he worked his way up via the company's secretariat to become a deputy board member in 1973 and full board member in 1976, winning the board chairmanship in 1987 after having once been passed over.

It was Reuter's ambition, starting in the mid-1980s, to shape Daimler-Benz, then only involved in luxury carmaking, into a multi-level high-tech concern. Billions were spent to acquire aviation and electronics operations in what he envisaged would create a "synergy" of expertise. The reality lagged far behind his vision.

Thin-skinned, Reuter in the final years had to bear the brunt of the critics who dubbed him the "greatest annihilator of capital of all times."

And now Reuter in a retrospective mood, admits his doubts: "To this day I ask myself whether a company like Daimler-Benz in fact was mature enough — inwardly and outwardly — for the path which we had decided on."

Reuter's successor, Jürgen Schrempp, has moved to refocus Germany's largest industrial com-

pany back to its traditional automotive business.

Schrempp, who came in for criticism in Reuter's book, has refrained from answering directly to it. He only says that at the end of Reuter's era two-and-a-half years ago, only five of Daimler's 35 different business operations were working at a profit. Today, almost all of the remaining 23 units are in the black.

In 1995, the year Reuter stepped down, Daimler suffered record losses of 5.7 billion marks (\$3.2 billion), largely due to the huge problems from the company's aerospace division.

At his retirement, Reuter moved up to Daimler's supervisory board. But less than a year later, in February 1996, he surprisingly stepped down amid criticism about Daimler's then mounting financial problems.

For now, Reuter is still supervisory board chairman of the European plane company Airbus Industrie — in which the Daimler aerospace division Dasa has a stake — but he is to leave that post at the end of March. He will be succeeded by the current boss at Dasa, Manfred Bischoff.

Like previous board chairmen,



Edzard Reuter

Reuter to this day still has an office at Daimler's headquarters in Stuttgart.

And he keeps busy with about a dozen supervisory board and honorary positions throughout the

German industrial landscape. For example, he is chief controller for a Berlin bank and is on the supervisory boards of Allianz insurance and the Viag conglomerate. For his efforts in the reconstruction

of the famed Potsdamer Platz in his home city of Berlin, Reuter is about to be made an honorary citizen there. Active in his retirement, he also spends his free time devoted to his hobbies of horseback riding and sailing.

Thin and ascetic-appearing, Reuter still represents the idea that a commercial enterprise must be more than a machine spewing forth profits for investors.

He rejects a company which is only fixated on its stock quotation and the concept of "shareholder value," the idea of doing everything to make a company attractive to shareholders.

A member of the left-of-centre Social Democrats since 1946, he has entered the debate which is far from over in German industry. The man to whom Daimler owes its thanks for an art collection and for his efforts to promote German sports for a broad public, would no longer feel very comfortable at Daimler-Benz.

In one respect he seems to have had an impact on his successor Schrempp. The current Daimler boss no longer mentions the word "shareholder value" — at least in his comments inside Germany.

— DPA

Mobile telephones take on French accent in Paris

By Irwin Arieff
Reuters

PARIS — The portable telephone is booming in Paris, taking on a French accent in business, affairs of the heart and behind the wheel.

Pedestrians, who have always had to worry about being mown down by insouciant drivers, now have a new fear: that the person whose car is speeding towards them is distracted by an angry phone call from the boss.

But lovers are finding a mobile an invaluable accomplice.

"It's the adulterer's best friend," observed the weekly *L'Evenement du Jeudi*.

Because your number remains the same whatever your location, you can call home or be called without your spouse ever learning your precise whereabouts.

The French grumble that always being accessible makes it too easy for work to intrude into their private lives. Wherever you are, you are never more than a call away from the office.

But when something really important is at stake, such as a serious dinner, the phone is quickly shut off with no guilt feelings.

"For us, the portable telephone is no problem whatever," insists an employee at the three-star Taillevent restaurant, where a meal can easily cost 1,200 francs (\$200) or more

per person.

"We have no need for a rule on portables as our clientele always turn off their phones at the door and switch them to their voice-mail," he said.

At more casual eateries, on the other hand, the mobile phone has become a part of the landscape. And people seem to like it that way.

Enter a café or brasserie at midday and you will find a telephone or two on many of the tables.

When ringing is heard, diners at neighbouring tables lunge for their respective briefcase or bag.

Comical exchanges along the lines of "is that mine or yours?" Makes it easier to strike up a conversation with the stranger lunching to your left.

Competition means
lower prices, better service

Mobile phone calls were not even possible in France until 1992, but three different firms now compete in the field, leading to lower prices and better service.

There are now nearly six million mobile phones in use in France — about one for every 10 residents. Manufacturers estimate another two million will be sold this year.

Parisians appear particularly addicted to the

device. Walk down any street in the capital and you will see people talking on their mobiles while walking the dog, sipping a coffee in a café or even riding a bicycle.

With more and more phones in use, there has been a bit of a backlash.

There are now nearly six million mobile phones in use in France — about one for every 10 residents.

A recent CSA poll for the daily *Le Parisien* found that 57 per cent of the French people favour some sort of restrictions on portable telephone use in public places.

Asked to specify where mobile phones were appropriate, strong majorities opposed their use in restaurants or cars, at sporting events, on commuter trains and buses and even on the beach or at a café.

"We don't believe there is a need for a law like the one creating no-smoking zones, but there is room for a code of conduct," acknowledged a spokesman for France Telecom, the country's largest mobile phone ser-

vice provider.

"Of course, the most important thing to remember is to be polite," the spokesman said, adding that France Telecom was publishing a guide to mobile phone behaviour later this month.

In the meantime, a handful of restaurants and some theatres have posted signs at their entrances, asking clients to turn off their phones.

The Palais des Congrès, one of the capital's largest commercial centres, put up signs after a ringing phone disrupted a concert by singer Charles Aznavour.

Aznavour urged the guilty party to answer quickly "so your neighbour can hear the end of my song."

Phones add to
driving hazards

The growing use of mobile phones in cars has added a whole new element of danger to the Parisian street scene, already famous for reckless behaviour.

The French, known for speeding even in thick fog after heavy drinking, now juggle with their phones as well as the gear box and steering wheel.

Traffic safety officials say statistics are unavailable on the number of accidents in France that can be blamed on mobile tele-

phones.

But France Telecom found in a recent survey that two out of three mobile owners used their phones in cars, and state safety officials said their studies proved that mobiles — even so-called "hands-off" models — distract drivers.

The police regulate phone use in vehicles under a law essentially requiring drivers to be in control at all times.

Violations are punishable by a fine of up to 230 francs (\$38).

The statute makes no specific mention of mobile telephones, but the police are taking action, the spokeswoman for France's Highway Safety Directorate told Reuters.

"I ought to know. My husband was just fined," she said.

Mobile phones have even been shown to be hazardous to journalists.

France's feisty Employment Minister Martine Aubry blew up at a reporter whose phone began ringing in the middle of a recent news conference.

"Let's have some respect. Please turn off your mobiles," Aubry sneered.

But Finance Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn found himself apologising to reporters not long ago when his phone interrupted a news conference at which he was presiding.

It was the Bank of France, calling to tell him about its own competing press event.

King meets UAE president

(Continued from page 1)

day visit to UAE and Oman was aimed at briefing the leaders of these countries on the King's initiative to bring about direct dialogue between the United States and Iraq, thus contributing to easing the tension and sparing the region the consequences of any military action against Iraq.

In a statement to Jordan News Agency, Petra, and Jordan TV, Dr. Anani said the visit also aims to restore momentum to the stalled peace process.

Dr. Anani pointed out that three Iraqi officials have reacted positively to the King's initiative.

In Amman, the Iraqi ambassador to Jordan, Nouri Al Weiss, landed the King's initiative as a positive step. In a statement to Al Aswaq Arabic daily, Mr. Weiss said there has been coordination between Iraq and Jordan on this subject, adding that Iraq is waiting to see the results of the King's visit to Washington later this month.

Dr. Anani said the Turkish government had welcomed the King's initiative and proposed its own initiative of

"peace amongst neighbours," aimed at restoring relations between Iraq and its neighbours.

To mobilise support for the King's initiative and to promote the "peace between neighbours" initiative, Dr. Anani met with heads of Arab and foreign missions in Amman Monday and briefed them on the particulars of the King's initiative to encourage U.S.-Iraqi dialogue, as well as on the Jordanian and Turkish moves to restore normal relations between Iraq and its neighbours. However, he said "we'll feel the results of this initiative when King Hussein meets with President Clinton this month to discuss it."

Later on Tuesday, Dr. Majali and UAE Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Sultan Ben Zayed Al Nahayan reviewed bilateral relations in the various fields and the recent developments in the region, particularly the Middle East peace process and the Iraqi crisis.

Iraq vows to respect Annan deal as U.N. prepares to test accord

(Continued from page 1)

accord, warned that "severe consequences" could only mean one thing: use of force against Iraq.

The White House said Tuesday "severe consequences" referred to in a U.N. resolution on weapons inspections in Iraq was a clear reference to a military strike.

White House spokesman Michael McCurry said "the Security Council is taking the doctrinal view that there is no automaticity" in resolution 1154.

"One can certainly appreciate some of the statements by those nations. But they are fully cognizant of the fact that the phrase 'severe consequences' means exactly that."

"Diplomacy must be backed by force and the U.S. clearly has stated, the president has also stated, that any reneging on the commitments Iraq has acknowledged will lead to severe consequences, which very clearly means military action," Mr. McCurry stressed.

"The Russians understand fully that there will be consequences if there is a failure by Iraq to live up to this agreement," he added.

Bill Richardson, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations also warned Tuesday that "any, I repeat any, attempt by Iraq to provide less than immediate unrestricted and unconditional access to any site will, as this resolution states, result in the severest consequences for Iraq."

He also hailed the resolution as a "big victory" for the United States.

"We got everything we wanted," Mr. Richardson said on NBC television.

"This was a big victory for us because we got change from 'very serious consequences' to 'severe'. So we got even more than what we wanted," Mr. Richardson said.

Meanwhile, U.S. State Department officials met ambassadors of more than 30 countries that have promised to pro-

vide troops or other support to a military coalition if Washington decides to use force against Baghdad, U.S. officials said.

They met to discuss continued preparations for possible military force should Iraq fail to comply, officials said.

Thomas Pickering, under secretary of state for political affairs, and Eric Newsum, acting assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, "emphasised the importance of continued coalition preparations" in their meeting with the allies, the State Department said.

"But as recent events have made clear, it is necessary that the international community remain prepared to act forcefully if Baghdad fails to comply with its commitments and obligations," it added in a statement.

U.S. officials refused to list all the countries represented at Monday's meeting. Britain has been Washington's leading supporter but other NATO nations, Australia, Argentina and some east European states have also promised help.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright travels to Europe this week to discuss plans the United States will put in motion if Iraq violates the U.N. weapons inspections deal and to press allies to remain vigilant.

Ms. Albright begins her five-day tour in Kiev Friday before heading to Rome, Paris, London, Cologne and Germany for talks on the agreement signed a week ago to open up all suspected weapons sites in Iraq to U.N. weapons inspectors.

"I would fully expect them to go over the Iraq issue in great detail and plan for possible contingencies if past is prologue and Iraq does violate the agreement," State Department spokesman James Rubin said Monday.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook reiterated Tuesday that a military strike against Iraq remains possible if Baghdad does not respect its commitments to U.N. resolutions over weapons inspection and

disarmament.

"It has always been our position that there was already an existing legal authority for military action to enforce the existing undertakings of Iraq and that is not changed by this [U.N.] resolution," he told BBC radio.

"If he does break it there will be the severest consequences," said Mr. Cook. But "if Saddam does comply with what he has already agreed to, then there is the prospect of the lifting of sanctions and a return to normal life for the people of Iraq. The ball is now in Saddam's court." Iraq would be extremely unwise not to comply," said Mr. Cook, adding: "If you want Saddam Hussein to take seriously the demands we've made of him, you have got to be resolute and you've got to be sure that you demonstrate that."

Mr. Annan, meanwhile, told reporters that specific arrangements being worked out for the inspections of presidential sites were being finalised and "should be ready in a day or two."

The accord provides for the U.N. chief to name diplomats to accompany the U.N. Special Commission in charge of eliminating Iraqi weapons of mass destruction during inspections of the sites from which UNSCOM was previously barred.

Mr. Annan has already named Sri Lankan arms control expert and diplomat Jayantha Dhanapala to head a Special Group of diplomats and UNSCOM inspectors.

In a sign that UNSCOM has been marginalised, Western diplomats in New York said the secretary general's staff was drawing up the new inspection procedures for the presidential sites in collaboration with UNSCOM.

In the past, such procedures would have been drawn up by UNSCOM alone. Mr. Annan on Monday urged both UNSCOM and Iraq to live up to the agreement. "I hope this is a new chapter," he said, which could lead to the lift-

ing of seven-year-old U.N. sanctions against Baghdad.

UNSCOM, accused of heavy-handed methods in the past, is now expected to show respect for Iraqi dignity and sovereignty, while Iraq must co-operate with the inspectors in line with U.N. resolutions tied to the sanctions.

A senior Iraqi diplomat said Tuesday the accord would bring a halt to acts of provocation by UNSCOM.

"The presence of diplomats will be an important guarantee against any provocative or unjust act," said Barzan Takriti, Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva.

Also in a confident tone, Mr. Aziz said Iraq did not fear the U.S. and British military deployment which has been kept in place in the Gulf to punish Baghdad if it violates the accord.

"I think this is a waste of money... they are wasting their taxpayers money," he said.

In Baghdad, U.N. arms experts carried out routine inspections of 11 sites on Tuesday and did not encounter any problems, the official Iraqi news agency INA reported.

INA, quoting a statement from General Husam Mohammad Amin, the Iraqi National Monitoring Directorate director general, said eight groups inspected 11 sites. One group used a helicopter to reach a site, he said.

The inspections were carried out "without problems and with the cooperation" of the local authorities, said Gen. Amin, whose body is the official liaison with the U.N. Special Commission searching for banned weapons of mass destruction.

Agassi overcomes sixth seed to reach 2nd round

SCOTTSDALE (AFP) — Andre Agassi stormed to victory after being caught by surprise early against Spaniard Albert Portas to reach the second round of the \$340,000 Franklin Templeton Classic 3-6, 6-1, 6-2 Monday night.

World No. 50 Agassi finished last year on 122 and then embarked on a serious comeback which has already earned him a 1998 title, last month in California over Pete Sampras.

Agassi stayed competitive throughout the 32-minute opening set against the sixth seed, played in chilly desert temperatures. The defeat of Portas was the fourth on the day for a seed.

"It's been two weeks since I played and I was a little tentative in the first set," said Agassi. "You don't want to make mistakes to start the tournament. I just had to get into it. He served well in the first set. All of a sudden, I'm down a break. But I stayed with it. When I stepped up the pace, he couldn't keep up."

Portas, 24 and ranked 37th in the world, got the first opening as he broke the American for 3-1.

Agassi, a two-time winner of the tournament, rallied to hold his next serve and kept the Spaniard on the defensive with three break point chances in the seventh game while trailing 2-4.

But Portas escaped to win with an ace for 5-2. Agassi saved two break points in the eighth game and two set points for the sixth seed in the ninth before Portas took the set when Agassi netted a backhand.

Agassi stormed through the second set to level, allowing the Spaniard a single game. In the third set, he reached 5-1 on a love game and finished off the win in just over an hour.

The other six Spaniards in action on opening day had mixed results, with only second seed Albert Costa and the unrelated Carlos Costa earning first-round wins for the Iberian contingent.

Second seed Costa improved to a six-win, three-loss career mark over Slava Dosedel of the Czech Republic with a 7-6 (7/5), 6-



Andre Agassi

1 victory. Carlos Costa made Swede Magnus Norman the first upset victim of the week, ousting the third seed 6-4, 7-6 (8/6).

There was a loss for seventh seed Julian Alonso of Spain, upset 6-2, 6-2 by Dominik Hrbaty of Slovakia. Nicolas Lapentti of Ecuador, Agassi's next opponent, beat Spaniard Javier Sanchez 3-6, 6-3, 6-2.

American Jeff Tarango — commuting to the nearby tournament hotel on a bicycle carrying a heavy tennis

bag — knocked out Francisco Claver 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4. Spaniard Galo Blanco was beaten 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) by Dutchman Sjeng Schalken.

Agassi is well accustomed to playing in the dry, hot conditions, which are like those in his Las Vegas home. He won a title in San Jose, California, last month, a confidence boost after a poor 1997.

He also took the Scottsdale crown in 1993 and successfully defended in 1994.

Tuesday night's programme will be highlighted

by the return to an American court of Boris Becker after a two-year absence.

The 30-year-old German last played in the States at Indian Wells, California, in March, 1996. He earned his last victory on this continent at the 1995 U.S. Open, beating Patrick McEnroe in the quarterfinals.

The semi-retired Becker will make his Scottsdale debut in an all-German contest match against German No. 1 Nicolas Kiefer, his former pupil on the Mercedes junior team.

Barcelona return to the top

MADRID (AFP) — Barcelona surged back to the top of the Spanish first division Monday night, leaving Dutch manager Louis Van Gaal wearing a rare and relieved smile, when they came away 4-2 winners after a pulsating showdown at Racing Santander.

Barcelona, who have a game in hand, now have 52 points from 26 matches — two points more than rivals Real Madrid who beat Mallorca 2-0 on Saturday and who will be Barcelona's league opponents next weekend. But the visitors didn't get off to the best of starts against Santander and they found themselves trailing after just ten minutes when Uruguayan Fernando Correa slotted home a penalty after Couto brought down Ignacio Conte.

Barcelona had to wait for another hour before Brazilian frontrunner Rivaldo finally equalised — slamming home a superb shot from the edge of the box.

The goal brought the match to life.

Two minutes later Rivaldo put the visitors 2-1 clear when he scored a second goal — albeit a lucky affair with his shot being deflected into the net off a defender. But the celebrations on the Barcelona bench had hardly finished when Santander's Alberto Lopez Moreno volleyed home a bullet shot from inside the area after controlling a high cross.

To their credit, Barcelona refused to settle for a share of the points and as they pushed players forward, opening gaps in the tiring home defence.

Sonny Anderson fired home to make it 3-2 and he then put the issue beyond doubt with his second goal of the match after latching on to a neat pass from Rivaldo in the dying seconds.



Greg Rusedski

Rusedski, Rafter advance

ROTTERDAM (AFP) — Greg Rusedski scored a bizarre three-set victory over Moroccan Karim Alami in the first round of the \$750,000 ATP Tour event here Monday with neither player dropping their serve in a 2hrs 16mins match.

The third-seeded British player, bounced back from his first-round defeat in London last week, to score a 6-7 (7/9), 7-6 (7/3), 7-6

(7/4) win.

Rusedski, who served 17 aces, was joined in the last 16 by top-seed Patrick Rafter of Australia, fifth-seed Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands and sixth-seed Sergi Bruguera of Spain.

United States Open champion Rafter recovered after a shaky start to beat home player Peter Wessels 5-7, 7-6 (7/3), 6-1, former Wimbledon champion

Krajicek beat compatriot Dennis Van Scheppingen 7-5, 6-4 and two-times French Open champion Bruguera saw off Hicham Arazi, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4.

The day's other winners were Johan Van Herck of Belgium and Swede Mikael Tillstrom. Van Herck defeated Jiri Novak of the Czech Republic 6-7 (4/7), 6-3, 7-6 (9/7) and Tillstrom beat Marc-Kevin Goellner of Germany 6-1, 6-3.



Patrick Rafter

'Red Devils' to take no chances against Monaco

PARIS (AFP) — English champions Manchester United go into Wednesday's European Cup quarter-final with Monaco knowing that they cannot afford to make the same errors that Newcastle did against the French side in last year's UEFA Cup.

United, who are aiming to win their first European Cup since 1968, are well aware that the amount of space given to the razor-sharp strikeforce of African Player of the Year Viktor Ikebe and the Brazilian Sonny Anderson last year ended Newcastle's hopes of European glory.

Anderson has since departed for Barcelona but if anything the Monaco frontline is even more effective with former French midfielder star Jean Tigana able to call on the pace of Thierry Henry or the talent of promising French international David Trezeguet.

Ikebe, who won Olympic gold with Nigeria in 1996, showed he was in great form after returning from a stint in the reserves following a row with Tigana when he struck two goals against Marseille on Saturday.

Tigana, however, has injury worries with Trezeguet making a slow recovery from a left knee injury he picked up against Norway last Wednesday. Key Scottish midfielder John Collins has a broken big right toe, although the former Celtic man has said he will play as he is left-footed and it won't affect his shooting or passing ability.

Henry, who has found it hard to make the team recently, has also complained of a painful ankle while talismanic central defender Frank

Dumas is still struggling with a knee injury, although Tigana is not in the least bit phased by their possible absences.

"As far as I have seen the youngsters who have filled their places recently have improved in every match and I would not be worried if they had to play against Manchester United on Wednesday," the former Lyon coach said.

United coach Alex Ferguson, who would dearly love the European Cup to set the seal on his reign at the 'Red Devils', has, meanwhile, refused to take experienced centreback Gary Pallister on the trip.

Pallister lumped out of United's 1-0 win over Premiership rivals Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on Saturday and Ferguson believed it was too much of a risk to take the injury-plagued England international on such an important trip.

Ferguson will put Ronny Johnsen alongside either his Norwegian international teammate Henning Berg or David May, who previously played alongside Berg at Blackburn.

Germany's top two clubs — champions Bayern Munich and European Cup holders Borussia Dortmund — go into their European Cup quarter-final with both squads in clearly the wrong frame of mind.

The Bayern-Dortmund clash has all the German football fanatics licking their lips even though the two sides, both coached by top Italian bosses who have tasted European glory before, have been showing form well below their normal standards recently.

Bayern Munich and their German footballing

legend Lothar Matthaus highlighted how low morale had dipped in the often fractious Munich dressing room after the three-time European Cup winners lost 2-0 to struggling FC Cologne on Saturday — leaving them six points adrift of Bundesliga leaders Kaiserslautern.

"We are as low as we can get," Matthaus said.

UEFA CUP PREVIEW

"We can only hope for a miracle (against Dortmund). We are all depressed and just talked to each other about how we fouled up," the 36-year-old former World Cup winning captain added.

If there is one thing that Bayern coach Giovanni Trapattoni knows all about, however, it is winning European trophies.

Trapattoni is the most successful Italian club coach of all time, having coached Juventus to the 1977 UEFA Cup, the 1984 Cup Winners' Cup and the 1985 European Cup to add to the seven league titles they claimed in his time there.

Dortmund, for their part, did not do much better in Friday's Bundesliga match against Werder Bremen. The last 10 minutes of their 2-2 draw was a disorganised mess which had former Parma coach Nevio Scala red-faced and fuming.

"If we play against Bayern like we did today we might as well stay at home," he snarled.

The former dairy farmer, who led Parma to Cup Winners' Cup glory in 1993 as well as in the 1995 UEFA Cup, cancelled the players' days off over the weekend and took them straight into an intensive training camp.

Captain Stefan Reuter is definitely out because of a pulled thigh muscle while Bayern are waiting to see if defender Markus Babbel

gets over a badly bruised toe.

Real Madrid, who will welcome back Argentina playmaker Fernando Redondo from suspension and Fernando Hierro and teenage star Raul from injury, have adopted a cautious approach prior to Wednesday evening's clash with Germany's third side in the competition, Bayer Leverkusen.

Unlike Real, who won 2-0 against fourth-placed Mallorca with Yugoslav striker Predrag Mijatovic scoring on his return from injury, Leverkusen could only draw 0-0 against relegation strugglers Arminia Bielefeld on Saturday.

Leverkusen coach Christoph Daum is relying on a 20-minute video tape he had specially compiled to reveal all the Spaniards' secrets. Each Leverkusen player has received a copy and studied it at home.

"We're so well informed about Madrid we even know the songs they whistle under the shower," Daum joked.

The Germans are at full strength except for injured winger Erik Meijer and the suspended Markus Happe.

Juventus coach Marcello Lippi is not expecting an easy time against Ukrainian champions Dynamo Kiev, while the players are conscious of needing not just to win, but to do so handsomely if they are to avoid any nasty surprises in Kiev.

"We've been following Dynamo closely," Lippi said. "And the three matches we've seen have only confirmed what we knew already."

"They are an extremely well-organised side, with some great individual players — starting (striker Andrei) Shevchenko, who has half the clubs in Europe after him."

Dynamo Kiev will fly to Italy on Tuesday after more than three weeks of intense preparation in sun-baked Israel.

During their stay the Kiev club defeated a Russian under-21 team 5-0 and Israeli side Maccabi Haifa 2-0.

The Ukrainian outfit also drew 1-1 with top Russian side CSKA Moscow and 0-0 with Russian UEFA Cup quarter-finalists Lokomotiv Moscow.

"Our main goal at the training sessions was to prepare the players for the match against Juventus in the best way possible, and I think we did that," Alexei Mikhailichenko, one of the Kiev club's assistant coaches told AFP.

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL: 604144 PHILADELPHIA *1*	CINEMA TEL: 604144 PHILADELPHIA *2*	CINEMA TEL: 609938 PLAZA	CINEMA TEL: 609938 CONCORD *1*	CINEMA TEL: 609938 CONCORD *2*	CINEMA TEL: 609938 ABDOUN	CINEMA TEL: 609938 ABDOUN	CINEMA TEL: 609938 NOW ON DAILY
	Demi Moore ... in G.I. JANE	Pierce Brosnan as James Bond... in 007...TOMORROW NEVER DIES	I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER	Adel Imam & Yusra ... in RISALA ILA AL WALI (ARABIC)	ROBIN WILLIAMS FATHERS' DAY	VOLCANO	THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE	
	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30	Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Starring Hisham Yanes and his group	
			GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE	LONG KISS GOODNIGHT	& High School High			
			Shows: 5 p.m. only	Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30		For reservations call: 4640155, 4625155	

Arsenal held at West Ham

LONDON (AFP) — Arsenal moved back to second place in the English Premiership Monday — but they were left kicking themselves for not pocketing all the points after being held to a dull 0-0 draw in the London derby at West Ham.

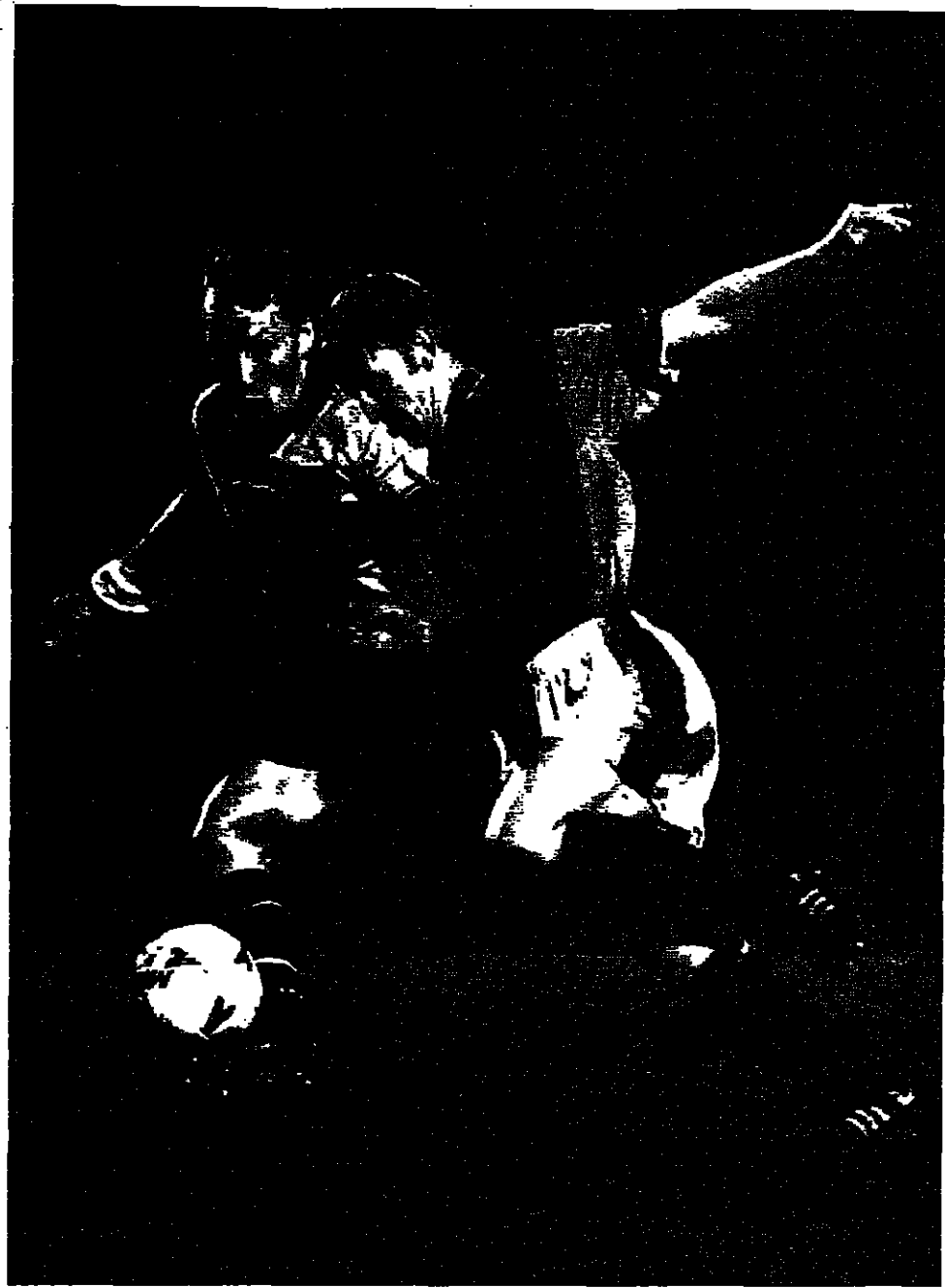
The Gunners, although they have two games in hand, now trail Manchester United by a massive 11 points.

Having beaten West Ham in the League at Highbury, and having knocked them out of the League Cup just after Christmas — Arsenal were favourites to come away with a win on Monday — six days before the two sides meet again in an FA Cup quarter-final.

West Ham had a mountain of possession, particularly in the second-half, but they rarely looked like beating young goalkeeper Alex Manninger.

Arsenal's limited attacks could have produced two goals from blatant-looking penalty offences by David Unsworth who seemed to clearly handle the ball to stop David Platt's first half through-ball and who then bundled Nicolas Anelka down when the French youngster chased compatriot Emmanuel Petit's superb through-ball.

And just before the final whistle, French goalkeeper Bernard Lama, making his



Lee Dixon of Arsenal (L) is tackled by Steve Lomas of West Ham United at Upton Park March 2. The two London clubs play each other as part of the Premiership programme (Reuters photo)

long-awaited debut with the East London side, brilliantly kept out substitute Luis

Boa Morte from six yards. West Ham were without Rio Ferdinand because of a

calf injury and Arsenal were lacking suspended Dutch star Dennis Bergkamp.

Basketball's First Division Championship gets underway

Veterans return to game as three teams vie for title

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kingdom's First Division Basketball Championship promises to be an interesting one this year with the top teams having prepared well as the eye the coveted title.

Unlike other seasons, the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) has opted to start the championship early in the season, giving the teams a short break to prepare their lineups for the six-team competition.

The teams will play two legs following which the top three will play a separate round to determine the champion. The last placed team will be relegated to the Second Division.

Fans will undoubtedly watch out for the return of three of the game's veterans to the game after a two year break.

Al Ahli who finished second last year have managed to lure back Marwan Matouq and Yousef Zaghoul to their lineup, although it remains to be seen how well they have prepared and how they will blend with the rest of their younger teammates.

Another change at Al Ahli is the return of former captain Imad Al Saeed as coach. Saeed had previously trained Al Jazireh before moving to Austria in the last couple of years.

Al Jazireh who won the Kingdom's basketball crown in 1997 are just out of serious preparation after taking part

in the West Asian Zone basketball qualifiers.

The titleholders hosted the five-team qualifiers amid preparations to retain the crown which they won last year ending a 30-year domination by rivals Orthodoxi and Al Ahli.

Al Jazireh came in second in the qualifiers after impressive performances against top teams beating Iranian champions Zobohan and Syria's Al Wihdeh before losing to Lebanon's Al Riyadi.

The only change on their lineup is the signing of Al Ahli's former veteran Samir Murqus who came out of two-year retirement and returned to the game.

Although not appearing in the same all round excellent form he is known for, Murqus is expected to lend the relatively young and upbeat team the match experience of over 20 years as Ahli and national team veteran.

With three matches played so far, the top three teams scored easy wins with Al Jazireh beating Al Jeel 83-54, Al Ahli overcoming Al Hussein 83-60

and Al Orthodoxi sailing past Al Jalil 87-42.

Al Jazireh next play Al Hussein today while Al Jeel meet Al Jalil.

Al Orthodoxi had an undisputed reign from 1976-1989 before Al Ahli won the title in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 aided by the signing of Naser Bushnaq.

Al Orthodoxi came back to win in 1991, 1995 and 1996 and are currently preparing to get back the title, led by veteran Hilal Barakat, Fadi Saqqa, Ayman Du'eis and a host of younger players.

Al Jalil have maintained fourth place for years and are not expected to come up with surprise results having only recently hinted that they opposed the format and regulations of the competition which "favour the top teams from the capital."

Another Irbid team, Al Hussein have just returned from a successful training camp in Syria, while Al Jeel are the newcomers to the division.

STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	St	St	Pl
Orthodoxi	1	3	0	87	42	1
Jazireh	2	2	1	83	54	2
Ahli	3	1	2	83	60	3
Hussein	4	1	2	60	83	4
Jeel	5	0	3	54	83	5
Jalil	6	0	3	42	87	6

SCOREBOARD

Home	Away	Score
Al Ahli	Al Hussein	83-60
Al Jazireh	Al Jeel	83-54
Al Orthodoxi	Al Jalil	87-42

Shrouded Formula

One race cars line the safety fence in pit lane as mechanics prepare for Sunday's Australia Formula 1 Grand Prix March 3. Melbourne's Albert Park hosts the season-opening race of the 1998 season, the first of 16 scheduled Grands Prix (Reuters photo)



CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

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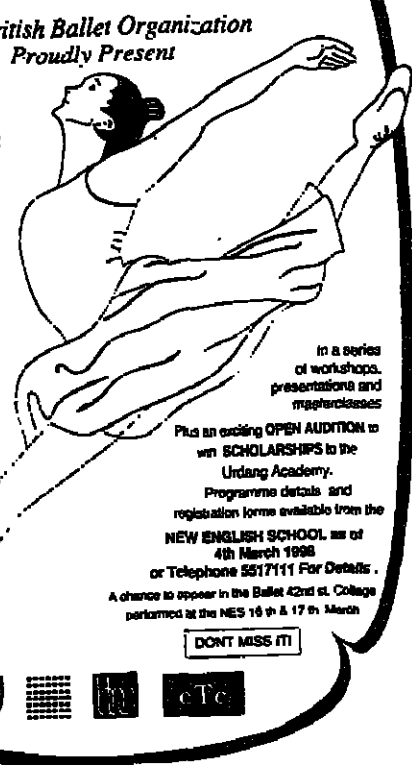
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U.N. oil experts expected in Baghdad this week

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A U.N. team in charge of assessing Iraq's ability to boost its supervised oil exports to finance imports of humanitarian goods is due in Baghdad later this week, a U.N. official here said Tuesday.

"A technical team of oil experts is expected to arrive on or around March 7 to assess the needs of Iraq to produce and export oil," said Eric Falt, spokesman for the U.N. coordinator of humanitarian aid to the country.

"It will also look into requirements for repairs and rehabilitation of the oil facilities," he said in a statement.

The experts will assess Iraq's output and export capacity following the U.N. Security

Council's decision last month to more than double, to \$5.2 billion, the amount of oil Baghdad is allowed to export every six months under an "oil-for-food" accord.

The council is also granting Iraq a special exemption from U.N. sanctions to import equipment and spare parts to repair its wells and pipelines following the team's assessment.

Iraq has said it can only export \$4 billion worth of oil every six months at the current low prices on world markets because of the impact of U.N. sanctions on its oil industry.

Mr. Falt also said Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al-Sahhaf would be in New York next week for the

start of discussions with the United Nations on stepping up the aid programme.

The talks on distribution of food and medicine to Iraq's 22-million population will open on Monday, he said.

"A few weeks will be necessary to discuss the new distribution plan before it is presented to the secretary general [Kofi Annan] for his approval," said the spokesman.

The current phase of the oil-for-food accord — allowing \$2 billion of crude exports — runs from December 1997 to June 1998. The expanded deal could start in April, according to U.N. aid coordinator Denis Halliday.

Anthrax inoculations ordered for U.S., U.K. troops in Gulf

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen ordered Tuesday that U.S. forces in the Gulf be inoculated against the deadly germ warfare agent anthrax beginning this month, the Pentagon said.

Mr. Cohen and General Henry Hugh Shelton, the chairman of the U.S. joint chiefs of staff, were themselves vaccinated against anthrax, a bacterium which kills within a week when inhaled by humans, the Pentagon said.

"After a careful review, I have concluded that vaccinations against anthrax is a safe, prudent force protection measure," Mr. Cohen said.

More than 30,000 U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines are deployed in the Gulf to force Iraq to yield to U.N. inspections aimed at eliminating its weapons of mass destruction.

The Pentagon said U.S. military personnel in the Gulf will begin receiving the mandatory six-shot series of vaccinations against anthrax this month.

The entire series of shots, which are administered over 18 months, are needed for full immunisation against anthrax.

With each shot, however, immunological defences against the bacteria increase.

British Defence Secretary George Robertson had himself vaccinated against anthrax Tuesday and urged all British troops currently serving in the Gulf to follow his example.

A voluntary vaccination programme for British troops starts Wednesday and involves three injections over a six-month period.

Antibiotics, which are effective against anthrax if taken before symptoms occur, also have been shipped to the Gulf, the Pentagon said.

New systems of sensors for detecting anthrax and other biological agents have been deployed with U.S. troops in the Gulf.

Amid concerns that Iraq could use anthrax against U.S. troops in the Gulf, the Pentagon announced in December that it planned to "vaccinate" all 1.4 million members of the U.S. military against anthrax.

But it delayed administering vaccinations until certain conditions were met: supplemental testing of the vaccine, establishment of a system to track people who had been vaccinated,

approval of plans to inform military personnel of the programme, and an outside review by an independent expert.

The Pentagon said those conditions had been met, allowing inoculations to proceed at the request of the commander of U.S. forces in the Gulf, Marine Corps General Anthony Zinni.

Anthrax was singled out as the most likely germ warfare agent to be encountered because it is lethal and relatively easy to produce, store and spread over a large area in the air, the Pentagon said.

Britain and Canada planned separate vaccination programmes for their forces in the Gulf, the Pentagon said.

The Pentagon, which got a black eye for its handling of the unexplained illnesses afflicting veterans of the 1991 Gulf war, produced an information sheet intended to reassure troops there was no evidence linking it to such illnesses.

The vaccine being administered has been licensed for use in the United States since 1970 and has no known long-term side effects, it said. Pregnant women, however, were advised not to take the vaccine.

Darkhorse threatens to unseat incumbent Israeli president

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's presidential race heated up Tuesday, a day before the vote in parliament, as little-known Likud Deputy Shaul Amur threatened for the first time in history to defeat an incumbent.

As Mr. Amur and incumbent Ezer Weizman lobbied for the support of undecided deputies, some analysts predicted Wednesday's vote could leave neither candidate with the necessary majority of 61 members in the 120-seat Knesset.

Earlier predictions in the Israeli media suggested that Mr. Weizman, 73, would handily defeat Mr. Amur, a 57-year-old mayor of a small northern town, for a second five-year term in the largely ceremonial post of president.

But Tuesday the Maariv newspaper forecast that Mr. Weizman would garner only 58 votes in the secret ballot, with Mr. Amur close behind with 57 votes and other deputies abstaining.

If neither candidate gets 61 votes, a second round of voting would be held immediately and all deputies would be obliged to participate.

No Israeli president who has sought a second five-year term has been challenged for reelection and some newspapers continued Tuesday to predict a handy win for Mr. Weizman.

But the outspoken president has angered many in the ruling right-wing camp by pressing for more flexibility in peace negotiations with the Palestinians and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared determined to unseat Mr. Weizman.

Press reports earlier this week said Mr. Weizman

planned to withdraw from the race if he failed to win in the first round.

But Israel Radio quoted officials close to the president Tuesday as saying he would "fight to the end, for as many votes as it takes."

Members of parliament cautioned against predicting the outcome of the election, saying a number of Knesset members had pledged their votes to both candidates.

Amor: I will be the first president of the other side of Israel

"Everyone is lying to everyone," Maxim Levy, a deputy of the Geshet Party, told Israel Radio. "There are so many promises being made that will be broken."

Press reports said Mr. Netanyahu was badgering all members of his governing coalition to back Mr. Amur against Mr. Weizman, a former member of parliament for the Labour Party.

A number of coalition deputies, including some from the right-wing National Religious Party, the Israel B'aliya group of Russian immigrants and the centrist Third Way, were nevertheless reportedly set to vote for Mr. Weizman.

At the same time four deputies from the Arab Democratic Party, which usually aligns itself with Labour, have expressed opposition to Mr. Weizman due to his refusal over the past five years to grant par-

sons to Palestinian and Arab Israeli detainees.

Mr. Weizman and Mr. Amur represent nearly opposite ends of the Israeli social and political spectrum.

Mr. Weizman is a symbol of the Ashkenazi aristocracy which has dominated Israeli political life since the creation of the state in 1948.

His uncle Chaim was Israel's first president and his own political career saw him evolve from serving as a minister in right-wing governments to joining the left-leaning Labour Party.

Mr. Amur immigrated to Israel from Morocco in 1956 and climbed the political ladder to become mayor of Migdal Haemek, a small town near Haifa, and later a Likud member of parliament.

He represents the social underdogs — Sephardi Jews of North African and Middle Eastern origin who still struggle against social and economic discrimination.

Mr. Amur unabashedly touted his background during the campaign, insisting that "someone who comes from the people can serve all the people."

"I will be the first president of the other side of Israel," Mr. Amur said.

Mr. Weizman bristled at the notion he has failed to represent all Israelis.

"The president is very, very insulted," Labour Deputy Avi Yehzekel told Israel Radio after emerging from a meeting with him Tuesday.

"We need to take ethnicity and religion out of this vote," he quoted Mr. Weizman as saying.



UPSIDE DOWN IN DOWN UNDER: Italian Formula One driver Giancarlo Fisichella, 25, flies upside down with the Royal Australian Air Force's (RAAF) 'Roulettes' aerobatic flying team over the Albert Park grand prix track in Melbourne Tuesday. Fisichella, who drives for the Benetton Formula One team, will compete in the first race of the season at Albert Park on March 8 (Reuters photo)

Spy told Iraq about U.S. attack plan — press

WASHINGTON (AFP) — An Iraqi agent used information culled from the Pentagon to provide Baghdad with detailed plans for a U.S. military strike, the Washington Times newspaper said Tuesday.

The unidentified spy, whose last name is reportedly known to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), passed on the information to a senior Iraqi intelligence official named Salah Al-Hadithi, the paper said.

The FBI and the Pentagon refused to comment about the case.

White House spokesman Michael McCurry said of the report: "That would be a matter of utmost seriousness and I decline further comment."

The Times said the Iraqis learned about the plans for a massive attack in late January. The spy, a U.S. national or resident alien, told them it would take place within two weeks, last five days and involve precision-guided "smart bombs."

The information was from a Washington source who regularly gets Pentagon information, the paper said.

Shalabi asks for U.S. aid

WASHINGTON (AFP) — An Iraqi opposition leader in exile asked Monday for U.S. aid for his Iraqi National Congress (INC) to overthrow President Saddam Hussein.

"I am here to ask for overt U.S. support — not covert U.S. action," said Ahmad Shalabi in testimony before a U.S. Senate sub-committee.

"Saddam Hussein can only be removed by a popular insurgency, he is coup-proof," said Mr. Shalabi, whose group has been based in London since 1996.

"We look to the United States to provide the political, logistical and military help the INC needs to confront and replace Saddam," said Mr. Shalabi, who accused Washington of betraying him in 1996 by refusing to block a Baghdad offensive against Kurdish rebels in the north.

"We have received no U.S. support for at least 18 months now," he said.

Mr. Shalabi said that Vice President Al Gore had promised U.S. support in a letter dated August 4, 1993. According to Mr. Shalabi, Mr. Gore said in the letter that "we [Washington] shall not turn our backs on the Kurds" and other opponents of President Hussein's regime.

Netanyahu scrambles to head off new U.S. peace initiative

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is seeking the help of powerful Jewish American leaders and allies in Congress to fend off an expected U.S. government initiative to press Israel for a major troop withdrawal from the West Bank.

In a speech to presidents of major Jewish American organizations here late Monday, Mr. Netanyahu said the Palestinians were counting on U.S. pressure to force his government to cede more of the West Bank than it wants in order to break the year-old deadlock in peace negotiations.

"It is Israel and Israel alone which will make the decisions vital for its security, no one will make that decision for us," he said.

Israeli press reports said Mr. Netanyahu met privately with a series of Jewish American leaders in recent days, asking them to speak out against any attempt by U.S. President Bill Clinton's government to try to impose a troop withdrawal plan on Israel.

Mr. Netanyahu sent his top media advisor, David Bar-Ilan, to Washington this week to take the same message to Jewish American leaders and Israeli allies in the U.S. Congress, officials said.

A former Israeli ambassador in Washington, Zalman Shoval, said Tuesday that he had also been enlisted for what he called an "information campaign" targeting U.S. public opinion.

"We do not want a conflict with the [Clinton] administration but it is important that the Americans understand that only the parties themselves can find a solution" to the deadlock in the peace process, he told Israel Radio.

Mr. Netanyahu launched his lobbying effort after receiving indications that Mr. Clinton, with the Iraq crisis in remission and frustrated with Israel's intransigence in peace talks with the Palestinians, was preparing to go public with U.S. ideas for breaking the deadlock.

The U.S. plan will reportedly call on Israel to hand an additional 13 per cent of the West Bank over to Palestinian rule in a staged, three-month operation linked to Palestinian compliance with a series of Israeli security demands.

Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing government is said to want to limit the troop withdrawals to no more than nine per cent of the West Bank, 27 per cent of which is currently under full or partial Palestinian control.

The Palestinians claim that under interim peace agreements they should control around 90 per cent of the West Bank by mid-1998.

Washington has shown increasing impatience with Israel's reluctance to carry out the troop pullbacks, which are required under a U.S.-brokered agreement signed more than a year ago, and with Mr. Netanyahu's refusal to stop

building Jewish settlements in occupied areas.

For the past six months the United States had sought to bridge the gaps with quiet mediation.

But in the wake of the Iraq crisis, during which many Arab governments complained that Washington was making harsh demands of Iraq while allowing Israel to avoid its peace commitments, President Clinton is reportedly determined to go public with his own ideas.

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat said Tuesday that his side would welcome a U.S. initiative designed to make Israel honour its commitments. "We are waiting for the Americans to move forward," he said.

Mr. Netanyahu's intense efforts to prevent Mr. Clinton from acting clearly reflected deep concern that a new American initiative would name Israel as responsible for the deadlock in the peace process and increase the diplomatic isolation of his government.

Last month Mr. Netanyahu already tried to preempt any new American peace move by offering to enter into intensive, U.S.-mediated negotiations with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on a final peace settlement between the two sides that would skip over the troop withdrawals and other interim measures.

The Palestinians categorically rejected the suggestion.

Hindu nationalists top Indian polls but miss majority in hung house

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's Hindu nationalists insisted Tuesday they were still on course for power despite missing out on an election majority in a badly-fractured parliament.

The right-wing Hindu nationalist bloc, led by the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party, Indian People's Party), topped the national polls but fell short of a majority as counting headed towards a climax in the world's largest democracy, election officials said.

But the nationalists hope they can still lure members from other groups and form a coalition.

Election Commission officials confirmed that the nationalist bloc had won 236 seats out of 516 declared.

With only 29 seats left in the 545-seat parliament, the nationalists can now reach 265 seats at best, short of the majority mark of 273.

The BJP's rivals, meanwhile, who brand the nationalists as sectarian and a threat to India's secular constitution, are locked in talks in the hope of forging an anti-nationalist coalition.

India is electing its fifth government within two years following a string of weak coalitions.

The count, which began Monday involving 330 million ballots, was expected to end late Tuesday night.

The commission results showed the nationalists' main rivals, the once-dominant Congress and the outgoing centre-left United Front coalition, had 166 and 95 seats respectively.

They could overtake the nationalists if their tie-up talks prove successful. The tie-up of the seats were held by small parties or independents.

The elections were sparked in November, when an uneasy anti-nationalist coalition between the Congress and United Front collapsed in acrimony.

All sides Tuesday claimed they were best-placed to govern. Atal Behari Vajpayee, the BJP's prime ministerial candidate, said: "Though there are difficulties, the BJP is making efforts in consultation with its allies to form a popular government. The voters want the BJP and its allies to serve them."

Party spokesman Venkaiah Naidu added: "We are in touch with like-minded parties outside the BJP alliance who are opposed to the Congress."

"Nobody wants another election. Indians now realise how bad political instability can be."

Congress President Sitaram Kesri responded: "The time to stake a claim [to form a government] is nearing."

He said the party was talking with "like-minded secular forces."

Growing fears of another hung parliament sent shares plunging Tuesday.

The 30-share Bombay Stock Exchange sensitive index was down 128.31 points, or 3.4 per cent, to 3,644.30 points. A day earlier it had jumped 150.40 points, with investors' hopes high for a stable government.

But the Securities and Exchange Board of India, the capital markets regulator, said foreign institutional investors had got over their jitters, injecting \$198.6 million into Indian bourses in February.

Overseas investors withdrew almost \$400 million in the three months to January following the political crisis and Asian financial market turmoil.

India went to the polls on February 16, 22 and 28.

The Congress, which gambled on the Italian-born widow of former Premier Rajiv Gandhi as a campaign figurehead, conceded Monday it would not be able to rule alone.

The party has been in steady decline after ruling India for 45 of 50 years since independence under the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty.

Congress and the United Front are sworn enemies of the nationalists.

The BJP, committed to arming India with nuclear weapons, denies their accusations that it is sectarian.

Its philosophy of "one nation, one people, one culture" has been interpreted by critics as hostile to religious minorities.

The BJP, growing dramatically since the early 1980s, tried to set up a government in 1996 but was forced out within a fortnight after failing to establish a majority.

Its rise has been mirrored by the decline of the Congress, undermined by a plethora of new regional parties which have fragmented the political scene.



Buckingham Palace ceremony brings house down

LONDON (AFP) — A man was hurt when a large plaster moulding fell from Buckingham Palace's ballroom ceiling Tuesday as Queen Elizabeth was carrying out an honours investiture, palace officials said. The man, a guest at the ceremony, was taken to hospital with a cut head. A second person, sitting next to the man, escaped injury but was suffering from shock. Buckingham Palace said checks are being carried out after the heavy, gilded plaster moulding crashed to the floor. The queen looked up when the accident happened, but after a momentary pause, continued with the ceremony.

Romanian club sell player for meat

BUCHAREST (R) — Struggling Romanian club Jiul Petrosani have sold a player for two tonnes of meat, the club president said. Constantin Cami said that midfielder Ion Radu had been sold to second division club Viteza for two tonnes of beef and pork. "We will sell the meat and then pay all the other players' salaries," said Cami. He added that the club had also sold defender Liviu Baicea to second division Uj Arad for 10 footballs and a set of shirts and shorts. Jiul Petrosani are adrift at the bottom of the Romanian first division with six points and appear certain to be relegated.

Argentine police nab woman who robbed taxi drivers

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Argentine police said they had captured a woman who allegedly robbed taxi drivers by flaunting herself in their rear view mirrors and then choking them unconscious with a belt. Police told local media the 24-year-old woman used to hail taxis in the centre of Buenos Aires and ask them to take her on a long ride out to the suburbs. In the car she would distract the driver by taking off her belt and squirming suggestively. She would then slip her belt around the cabbies' necks, strangle them until they passed out and steal their money, police said.

Actor in biggest British film of all-time paid \$22,000

LONDON (AFP) — An actor who played one of the leading roles in "The Full Monty," the biggest grossing British film of all-time, was paid \$22,234 for his work. Steve Huison, who is growing his own vegetables to save money, said he was paid the actor's union minimum of \$2,470 per week for nine weeks of film. Huison said filmgoers assumed the stars had made a fortune out of the movie, which has taken nearly \$80 million in Britain alone. The actor said his latest project was "the allotment." "That's not a film, it's a piece of land," he said.

Art-lovers queue for 'Last Supper'

MILAN (AFP) — Art-lovers flocking to see Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece "The Last Supper," back on display after an interval of 20 years, have been frustrated by restrictions on the number of visitors imposed by Milan's cultural authorities. The refectory at the Dominican monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie, which reopened Sunday after a two-month closure to permit the erection of scaffolding around the fresco, can provide access for only 15 visitors every quarter of an hour. The monastery's guardians have had to cope with hundreds of disappointed tourists, many of them American and Japanese.